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THE ULTIMATE POP MAGAZINE

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Ocean Colour Scene
Republica

KIESZA
Tears on the dance floor

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
The boys are back

EXCLUSIVE

Shaznay Lewis

Her new solo album, 30 years of hits and the future of All Saints

'It feels crazy - I never saw this coming!'

ISSUE 28
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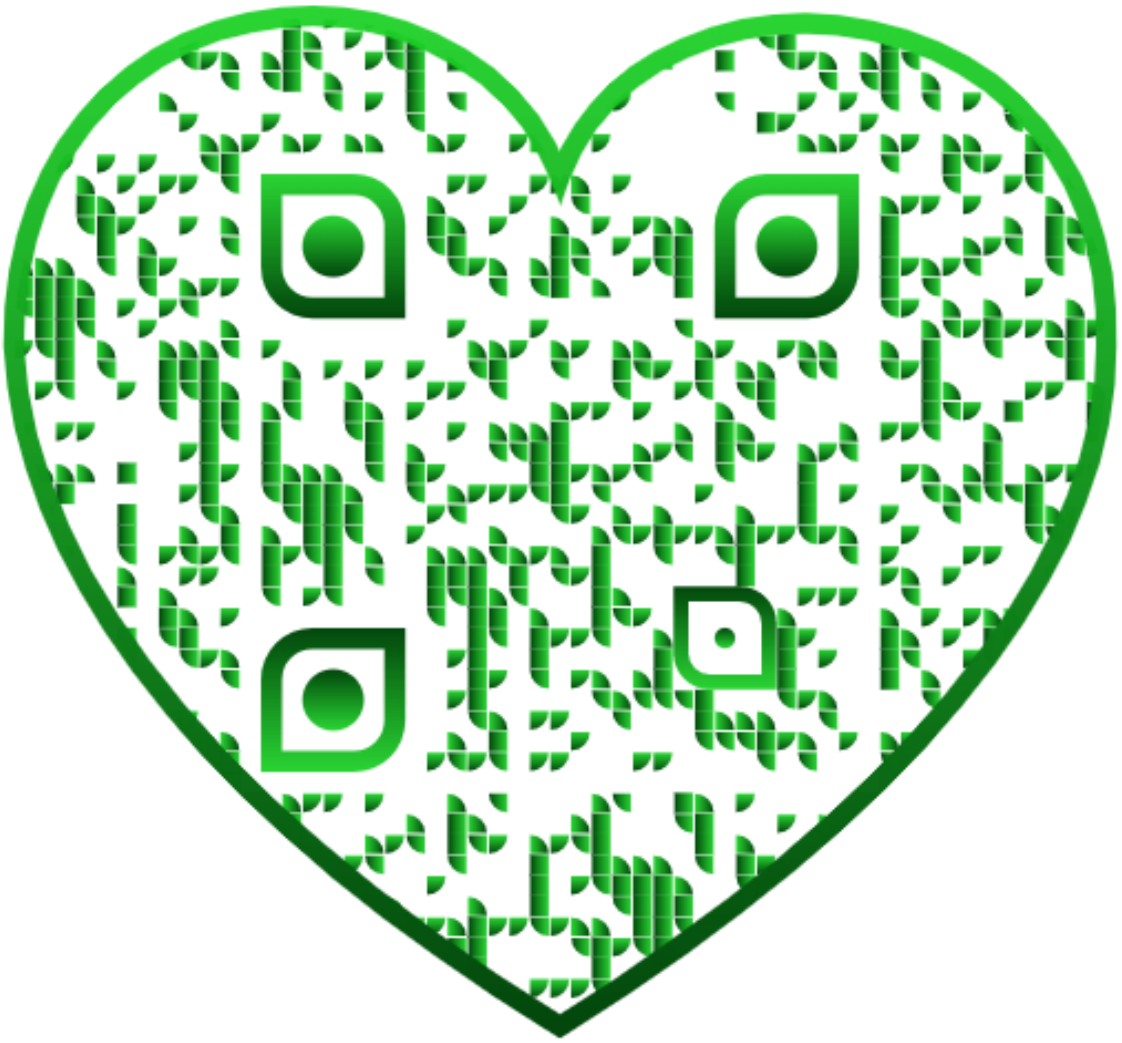

I Kissed A Girl

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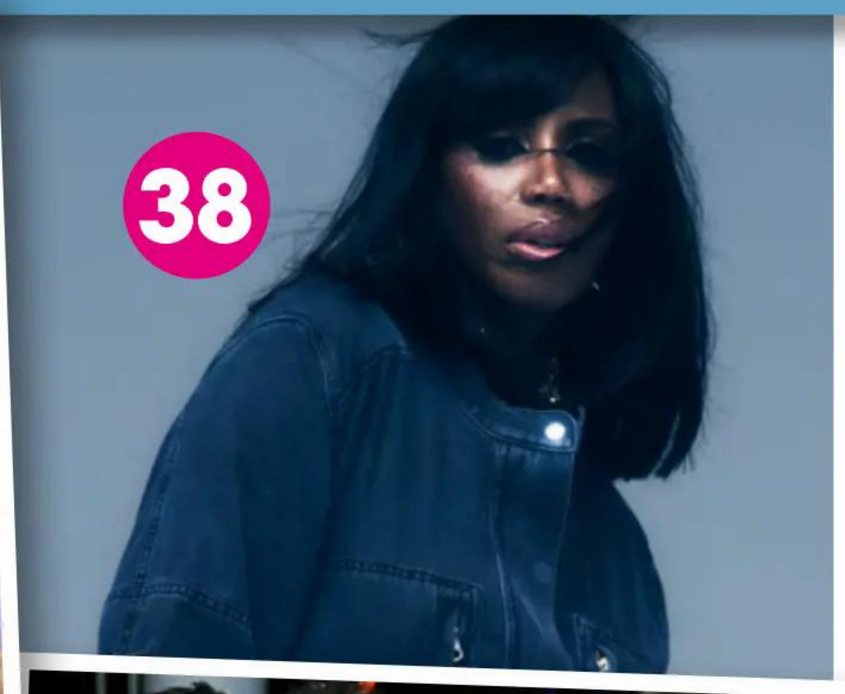

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FLASHBACK

NEIL FINN ON JOINING FLEETWOOD MAC

He's best known for his work with Crowded House and Split Enz, but for a while **Neil Finn** stepped in as frontman of Fleetwood Mac!

Crowded House star Neil Finn is no stranger to being drafted in to bands, having been recruited as a teenager to join his brother Tim's New Zealand new wave group Split Enz - so when Lindsey Buckingham departed Fleetwood Mac in 2018, he was top of Mick Fleetwood's list to step up to the plate.

"There wouldn't be a Fleetwood Mac if it wasn't for Mick," beams the singer-songwriter of the enigmatic English drummer. "They all attached themselves to it for large chunks, but they would have thrown it away. Mick kept the flame burning."

Speaking to CBS at the time of his joining the band, alongside former Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell, Stevie Nicks revealed the group considered "everybody we could think of - anywhere between, you know, 27 and 65" for the position, but it was the *Don't Dream It's Over* singer who was enlisted to join Mick, Stevie, Christine and John McVie in the most-recent line-up.

Initially, they had big plans to record new material - their first in half a decade - ahead of the 'An Evening With' tour, but that didn't quite come into fruition. "When I first joined the band, [Mick] said, 'Yeah, we'll do some new songs, we'll put them out before the tour and it'll be great!'," Neil recalls. "It was quite an appealing thought. But it became pretty obvious after a while that just to get the giant behemoth off the ground and onto a tour was enough, really, and going in the studio would have been a huge undertaking."

With over 50 years of history, from Fleetwood Mac's early years as a blues outfit with Peter Green, through various iterations into the 1970s and the arrival of Lindsey and Stevie to form the classic line-up, delivering iconic albums such as 'Rumours' (1977), 'Tusk' (1979) and 'Tango In The Night' (1987), it's their legendary catalogue, he offers, that kept them back. "It's a shame in a way, because it's the weight of the whole legacy that keeps them from thinking, 'Wouldn't it be fun to do this, that or the other?'," he adds. "You know, they've not played in Japan or South America [for many years]. There's all these places that you go, 'Wow, they could do really well there', and you'd think they'd want to do it.

"They didn't have much interest in even playing in Europe, because it was less important for them than being in America. And I don't say that in a critical way, but doing Glastonbury - they didn't see the romance of doing something like that. I put a pitch in for that..."

Marking the band's half-century, their setlist for the 'An Evening With' shows tapped into the pre-'75 era of Fleetwood Mac, including Neil and Christine's take on Danny Kirwan's 1970 'Kiln House' cut *Tell Me All The Things You Do* and a Stevie Nicks-led rendition of *Black Magic Woman*. "Initially, it was like, 'Oh, we could do *Station Man*', and all these really cool songs," Neil offers. "We did *Hypnotized* for a while, which is a fucking great song, but anything where the audience slightly dropped became difficult to keep in the set because there's so many hits to get through. So they kind of fell off the way a little bit, which was a shame.

"I also wanted them to do *Albatross*," he reveals. "I wanted to start with *Albatross* when we got to the UK and they looked at me like I was mad. Mick probably got it, and I don't think they've done it since Peter Green was in the band - maybe early on with Lindsey..."

The tour played across the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, but by the time the run was over the band had yet to enter the studio - despite Neil sharing online he'd been working on potential new tracks. "There's a lot of live tapes but we didn't bother doing any studio stuff," he confirms, revealing the only recording that did emerge from his time in the line-up was *Find Your Way Back Home* - a charity track by Neil featuring Stevie and Christine, which was the final time he saw the keyboard player before her passing in 2022.

"It was for the benefit of a new homeless shelter and Stevie did a lovely vocal on that," he smiles. "Christine sang on the end of it too, which was the last time I saw her. We were in the dressing room at the Palladium in London doing the Peter Green benefit tribute and I just got her to sing it in the dressing room with my laptop, microphone and Pro Tools. I'd say that's probably one of her last recordings, but what an amazing legacy of songs she has..." **RP**

● ***'Gravity Stairs', the new album from Crowded House, is out now.***

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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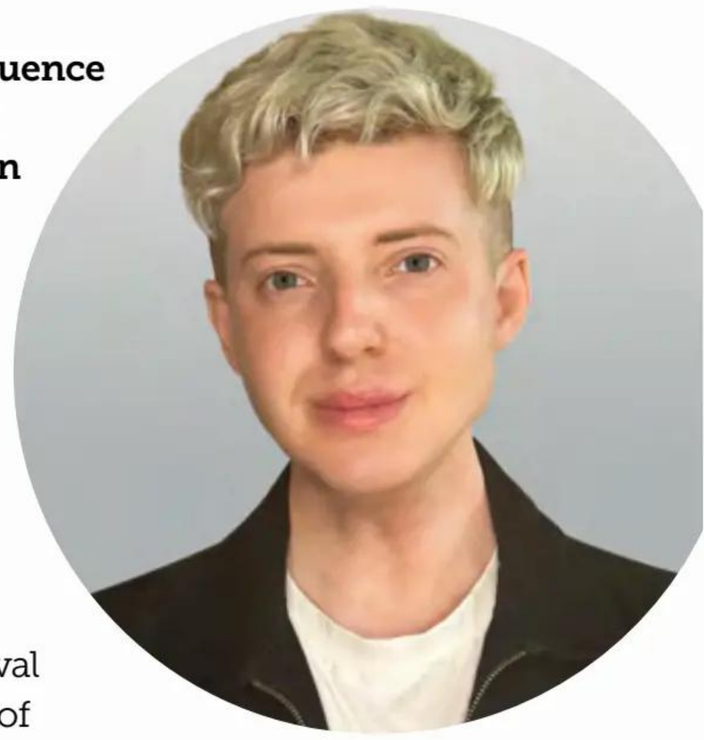
HEY THERE!



It's impossible to overstate the influence Shaznay Lewis has had on British pop since All Saints first arrived on the scene 30 years ago.

The band took on a handful of identities and iterations before the four-piece we all know and love finally debuted with the UK Top 5 smash, *I Know Where It's At*, in 1997, which - along with classics like *Never Ever*, *Bootie Call*, *War Of Nerves* and *Pure Shores* - was co-written by this month's cover star and marked the arrival of one of the finest singer-songwriters of her generation.

Over the decades that followed, the group released a total of five studio albums, most recently in 2018 with 'Testament', but now Shaznay is building upon the foundations of her 2004 solo debut 'Open' with her incredible new record, 'Pages'.

Occasionally, an LP comes along that has me hooked from start to finish and 'Pages' has absolutely had me in a chokehold since I first heard it. It's out this month and you *don't* want to miss it!

I catch up with Shaznay for this month's cover feature for a career-spanning interview touching upon the new era, her plans for the future and why now, as she heads into her 50th year, she's *finally* ready to step out of the shadow of the band and do things her way.

There's plenty more besides for you to dive into this month, as we meet New Kids On The Block to chat about their first album in 10 years and plans to tour the UK (they assure me it's in the works), stars of The Bluetones, Ocean Colour Scene and Republica appear in conversation ahead of their upcoming UK tour, and Canadian pop star Kiesza - who hit No. 1 with her debut single, *Hideaway*, in 2014 - discusses her new album and her six-year recovery after a car accident left her with a traumatic brain injury.

It's another issue packed with brilliant pop - there's some great albums out too this month, by the way (head to Reviews for more on those) - so I won't keep you here any longer. Enjoy!

Connor Gotto, Editor
@MrConnorGotto

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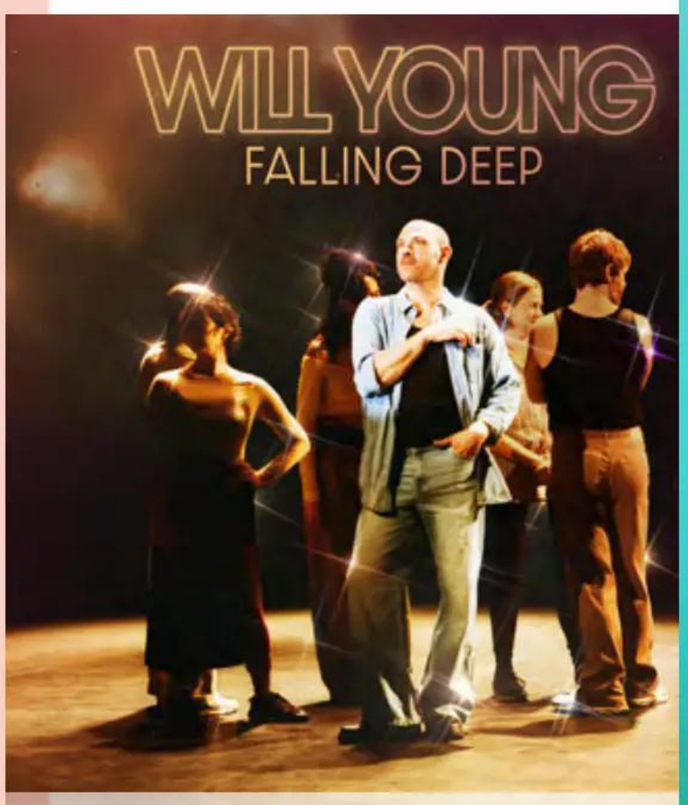


RETROPOP PLAYLIST

The latest releases from your favourite **RETROPOP** artists - all in one place!

WILL YOUNG - *Falling Deep* (BMG)
A joyous return to pop lifted from his first album of original material in five years, Will's new '80s-inspired single sits among the very best of his career to date.

VANESSA WILLIAMS - *Legs (Keep Dancing)* (Mellian)
The lead single from the US superstar's first studio album in 15 years is a bonafide earworm that sees Williams strut out onto the dance floor in spectacular style!

TAKE THAT - *You And Me* (EMI)
Arriving alongside the UK leg of the trio's world tour, the boys return with a singalong anthem and call to arms that's quickly become a staple of their live shows.

NICKI FRENCH - *Nothing Is Impossible* (Energise)
Eurovision veteran Nicki returns with a glorious, sparkling homage to ABBA in the shape of the latest single from her forthcoming album, due for release later this year.

PERRIE - *Forget About Us* (Sony)
Co-written with Ed Sheeran, Little Mix star Perrie is the latest from the group to go it alone and scored a Top 10 debut with this storming summer anthem.

PETER WILSON - *Heard It In A Heartbeat* (Energise)
A sweeping, synth-laden production from Aussie dance-pop star Peter, the second taster of his forthcoming album, 'Touch', coincides with 30 years in music.

LUCY SPRAGGAN FEAT. ROBBIE WILLIAMS - *Sober* (Ctrl)
Teaming up with pop legend Robbie on a new version of her emotional sobriety anthem, the track is among the singer-songwriter's most heartfelt songs.

GABRIELLE - *Sorry* (BMG)
Brooding with angst in the dust of a failed relationship, Gabrielle's latest release packs a punch with a subtle, understated delivery from the vocal powerhouse.

EMPIRE OF THE SUN - *Changes* (Universal)
The first new single from the Australian electronic duo in eight years taps into the sleek, synth-led vibe the duo is best known for.

HADDAWAY - *Lift Your Head Up* (Creator)
Leading his new record, the latest single from the '90s chart topper roots itself in the decade prior and proves he's still a fine pop star.

HOW TO LISTEN

Scan the QR code and check out all the **RETROPOP** *playlists in one place, over on Spotify!*

Top Of The Pops *tales*

Step back in time as we revisit classic moments from the 'Top Of The Pops' archives!

#25 THE ORB'S PAWN SHOOT

June 18, 1992: The Orb – *Blue Room*

The Orb's ambient dub leviathan *Blue Room* has two claims to fame. Clocking in at 39 minutes 58 seconds – two seconds under the maximum permitted by chart rules – it's the longest UK hit single.

Then there's the 'Top Of The Pops' performance, during which the group's Alex Paterson and Kris Weston sat on chairs playing chess for three minutes, in front of TV screens showing the track's video.

Paterson remembers the day well – despite being rather well-lubricated: "We were told at 12 o'clock, 'Stop drinking brandy or you'll get thrown off'," he revealed to 'Sabotage Times' in 2015. "So we poured our brandy into Coke cans and carried on drinking.

"We challenged all the bands who were performing to a game of football," he continued. "Utah Saints were the only ones that came out and had a game in the corridor." Take That declined so, as Paterson told 'The Guardian' in 2006, "We made up a football song to the tune of *It Only Takes A Minute* and chanted that to them all afternoon."

Featuring an avant garde board, the game saw the duo kitted out in spacesuits, clutching a couple of props: a globus cruciger (an orb with a cross on the top) and the band's mascot Flossie - a cuddly toy sheep, which later appeared on the cover of their 'Live 93' album. Although it reflects one of Paterson's interests – as a kid, he was taught chess by future Grandmaster Raymond Keene, son of a boyfriend of his mum – it wasn't actually his idea. "One of the girls in the A&R department at [record label] Big Life said: 'Why don't you play chess?'... I love playing chess, so I thought, 'Great. I'm up for that'."

Watching the clip, you can easily imagine the bewilderment of the 'TOTP' crew. "The producers were thinking: 'Where's the chorus? Where's the vocalist? Where do we put the cameras?'," noted Paterson, who also recalls being asked if a keyboard could be placed by the chess set.

Guest presenter Bob Geldof was not impressed by the spectacle, declaring it – with heavy sarcasm – "incredibly mind-expanding". But someone else was, as Paterson discovered three years later when paid a visit in the studio by Robbie Williams, who gushed, "That 'Top Of The Pops' changed my life!"

"He was thoroughly impressed with our attitude to 'TOTP'," Paterson told The Guardian. "He saw us bending the rules and enjoying ourselves, while Take That was packed into the format." **RP**

● ***Follow @TOTPFacts on Twitter for live trivia commentary on the BBC Four repeats.***

TOP 10
THE OFFICIAL CHART FOR JUNE 14, 1992

1 ERASURE
Abba-esque

2 NICK BERRY
Heartbeat

3 KWS
Please Don't Go

4 RICHARD MARX
Hazard

5 GEORGE MICHAEL
Too Funky

6 UTAH SAINTS
Something Good

7 KRIS KROSS
Jump

8 TAKE THAT
It Only Takes A Minute

9 UGLY KID JOE
Everything About You

10 ELTON JOHN
The One

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN **PHOTOS** BBC / TOP OF THE POPS

LINE-UP NEWS

SOPHIE PLOTS RETURN TO POP

Sophie Ellis-Bextor is set to come back with a bang after assembling a heavy-hitting line-up of collaborators as she works on new music.

The British pop icon returned to the global charts earlier this year after her classic hit, *Murder On The Dancefloor*, featured on the soundtrack to 'Saltburn', with the success leading to a US tour and a deal with former label Universal.

And she's wasted no time in getting back in the studio and crafting the follow-up to 2023's Top 10 LP, 'HANA', which looks to feature some of pop's biggest and most-successful songwriters and producers.

The *Get Over You* star's husband, Richard Jones, previously confirmed Sophie had reunited with Cathy Dennis (*Catch You*) and Richard X (*Starlight*) on the new record, with the singer herself revealing she's also been in the studio with frequent collaborator Ed Harcourt and disco legend Nile Rodgers.

"I've been songwriting. I've been in the studio with Ed Harcourt and Nile Rodgers," she said. "That was actually really fun. Would you believe it? We've done something kind of funky. I do like it. I like it a lot."

Meanwhile, Richard 'Biff' Stannard (*Heartbreak (Make Me A Dancer)*, *Bittersweet*) also revealed he's been drafted in for the project in a post on his Instagram Stories, showing himself and Sophie in the studio with singer-songwriter and producer Shura and Duck, who has worked on hits for Jessie Ware, Kylie Minogue and others.

The new material looks to debut later this year, so keep an eye on our website for all the latest.

PHOTOS LAURA LEWIS, INSTAGRAM_@BIFFCO

LULU FOR GLASTONBURY FAREWELL

Glastonbury bosses have announced this year's Field of Avalon line-up, which includes the last-ever concert from pop icon Lulu.

The Scottish star leads a line-up including The Feeling, Frank Turner, Kate Nash, Lucy Spraggan and Shaznay Lewis, among others, for the 2024 edition of the event at Worthy Farm, Somerset.

An announcement on the Glastonbury website reads: "Expect days of eclectic music representing the best in the world of contemporary, roots and folk music, a gender equal line-up and intimate, never-forget Glastonbury moments when you visit the Field of Avalon."

Lulu recently wrapped her 'Champagne For Lulu' tour - billed as her last run of shows -but she told The Sun she might head out for a few more dates.

"I'm doing a book and I'm working on a couple of things," she shared. "The people who organised this tour want me to do an extension of it because of the demand."

Tickets for Glastonbury have sold out. Sets from the festival will air across the BBC.

PHOTO COURTESY PF THE ARTIST

IN THE LOOP

ANASTACIA will release the Gold Deluxe Edition of her latest album, 'Our Songs', featuring new material

LIBERTY X sent fans wild as the '00s group reunited for a night out together

BLUR's performance at Coachella could be their last, according to **DAMON ALBARN**

GWEN STEFANI isn't ruling out more work with **NO DOUBT** after their recent reunion

MADONNA SET FOR BIG SCREEN CELEBRATION

Madonna will reportedly use footage from her final 'Celebration Tour' show in Rio de Janeiro for a new concert film set to hit streaming platforms.

The Queen of Pop attracted a record-breaking 1.6 million fans to the Brazilian gig at Copacabana Beach on May 4, with camera crews on standby to record the set, which celebrates her 40-year career.

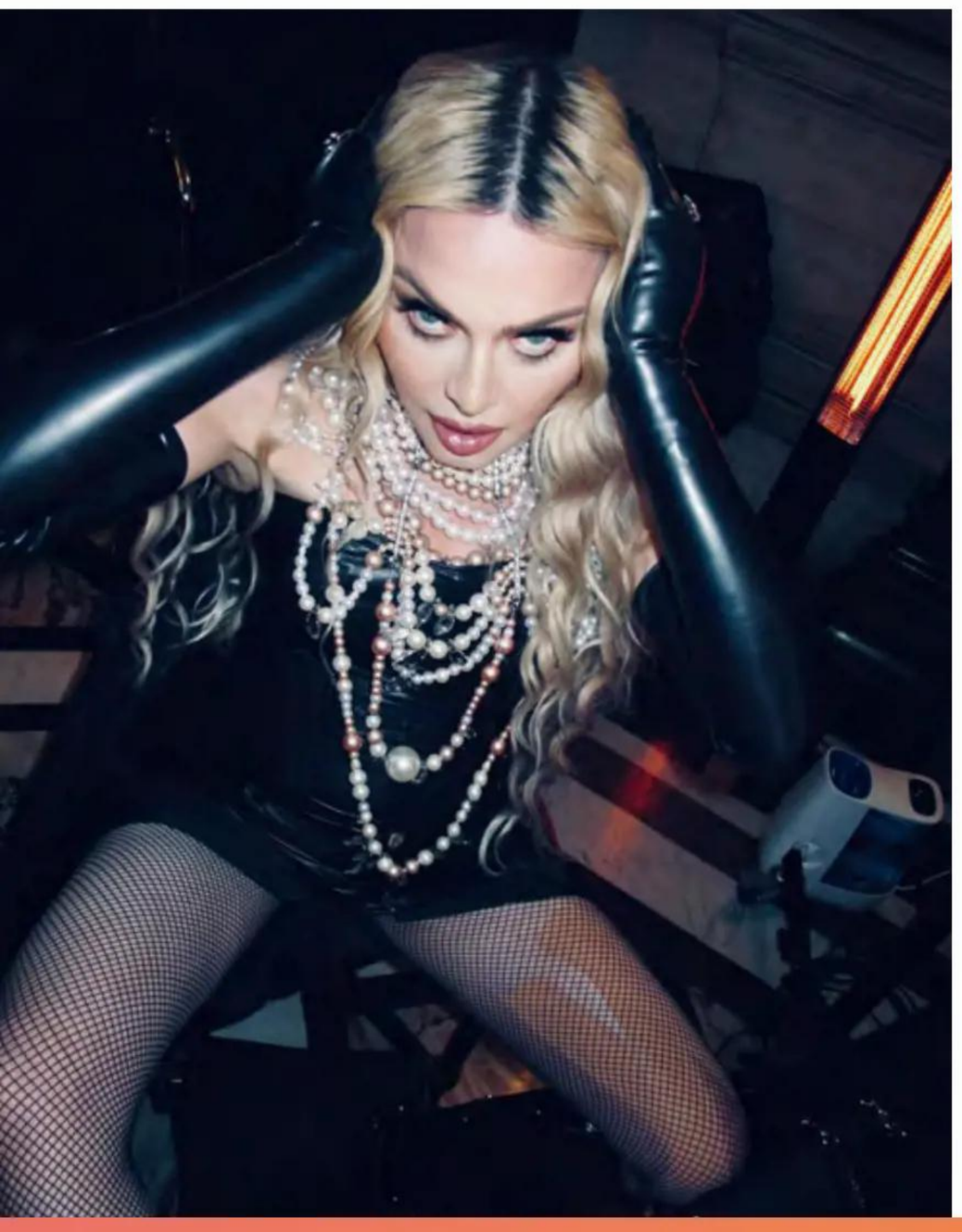
According to reports, the concert - which aired live on local TV - will be repackaged with behind-the-scenes extras before dropping on streaming platforms.

Taking place in front of the Belmond Copacabana Palace Hotel, no tickets were required for the show and admission was on a first-come, first-served basis.

Her last concert movie, 'Madame X', was released on Paramount+ back in 2021.

Details of the release will be over on our website as soon as we have them.

PHOTO INSTAGRAM_@MADONNA



JANET JACKSON ENTERS A NEW ERA

Janet Jackson finally looks set to release new music.

The superstar will return to the road this summer for the latest North American leg of her 'Together Again' tour, which launched in 2023, ahead of European shows throughout September and October, and in a new interview she revealed she's also been back in the recording studio.

Speaking during an interview with On Air With Ryan Seacrest, she shared: "On the last tour that we did in the States last year – the 'Together Again' tour – we did a few different songs, but this time around were even gonna do more songs, different ones that I've never done live before.

"There might be a new song here or there as well."

Pressed further on the subject, Janet – who released her most-recent LP, 'Unbreakable', in 2015, elaborated: "I feel bad because I mentioned this prior...

"It was supposed to come out, but we went into the pandemic and on top of that was a couple of things that I needed to straighten out in my backyard.

"So now, since we're past all that, we're going about putting out new music for sure."

Back in 2019, Janet announced a new album, 'Black Diamond', alongside an accompanying tour in 2020, but with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic the project never materialised.

For more on new Janet Jackson music and tour dates, visit our website.

PHOTO SOLAIMAN FAZEL

ALL SAINTS star **MELANIE BLATT** is reportedly working on new solo music

OASIS marked 30 years of their debut album by releasing a new live version of *Supersonic*

CLAIRE RICHARDS is set to front the forthcoming 'Everybody Dance' UK tour

PET SHOP BOYS are celebrating their new album, 'Nonetheless', with an intimate gig at London's KOKO

WILL YOUNG LIGHTS IT UP

Will Young is back with his new single, *Falling Deep*, lifted from the forthcoming album, 'Light It Up'.

The track is the first to be lifted from the hitmaker's ninth studio album – his first since the 2022 covers collection, 'Crying On The Bathroom Floor' – out August 9 on BMG.

The 10-track LP sees the singer-songwriter team up with new collaborators, pHD, the Scandinavian pop production/writing duo that has previously worked with Little Mix.

He also reunites with Andy Cato of Groove Armada and long-term writing partners Jim and Mima Elliot, who worked on Will's 2011 album, 'Echoes'.

"I think for me it was about finally feeling more content and being able to go back to embracing joyous unashamed pop music," says Will of the record. "I really hope this is the go-to pop album for a dance, for a cry and for a celebration. I know I do all three with it."

To celebrate the new album, the 'Pop Idol' winner is embarking on his most intimate tour yet – taking shape as an up close and personal evening of acoustic performances, stories and conversation.

"I'm very excited to be going to a lot of places I haven't been," he reflects. "I wanted to go to smaller venues so I could properly get around the country rather than just playing the big cities."

The 50-date UK run will kick off in September and play through to November. Tickets are on sale now. For full dates, visit our website.

PHOTO JAMIE NOISE

SHAKIRA READIES GLOBAL TOUR

Shakira has announced the first string of dates for her 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran' world tour.

Launching in the autumn, the Colombian star will play 14 arena shows across North America, starting on November 2 in Palm Desert, CA, and including stops in Los Angeles, Miami, Toronto, Brooklyn, Chicago and more.

The concerts will feature tracks from her new album, along with her legendary catalogue of hits, including *She Wolf*, *Hips Don't Lie* and *Did It Again*.

In a post on X, she wrote: "I'm so thrilled to announce the first dates for my 'LAS MUJERES YA NO LLORAN WORLD TOUR', a celebration for my wolfpack!

"The first leg of the tour will be across North America, the only chance to experience the show in a more intimate way! International dates to be announced soon, so stay tuned!"

It's Shakira's first tour since 2018, when she wowed fans at sold-out stadiums and arenas around the planet with the 'El Dorado' world tour.

Tickets for Shakira's 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran' world tour are on sale now. For full dates, visit our website.

PHOTO NICOLAS GERARDIN

IN THE LOOP

JONI MITCHELL honoured **ELTON JOHN** at the Gershwin Prize tribute show with a reworked version of *I'm Still Standing*

BONNIE TYLER topped the US iTunes Chart during last month's total solar eclipse with her '80s classic

KIM WILDE's new album is her "best yet", according to her brother and collaborator Ricky

LILY ALLEN has been working on tracks for her fifth studio album in Nashville

MISSY ELLIOTT ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER TOUR

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Missy Elliott will take to the road for her first-ever headlining tour this summer.

The rapper and producer shared details of the 'Out Of This World' run last month, with shows launching July 4 at the Rogers Arena in Vancouver, Canada.

The 24-date North American trek will include stops in California, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia, New York and more, before finally wrapping on August 22 at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Illinois.

Of the shows, which will feature support from Ciara, Busta Rhymes and Timbaland, the *Get Ur Freak On* hitmaker says: "This is an incredible time in my life as I am experiencing so many milestone 'firsts.' Being the FIRST female Hip Hop artist to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and now going out on my FIRST headline tour.

"Fans have been asking me to tour forever but I wanted to wait until I felt the time was right because I knew if I was ever going to do it, I had to do it big, and I had to do it with family!

"So get ready to be taken OUT OF THIS WORLD with me, Busta Rhymes, Ciara, and Timbaland! We can't wait to share this experience with the fans!"

Missy was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in November 2023.

Tickets for the 'Out Of This World' tour are on sale now. For full dates, visit our website.

Vanessa Williams is back

Vanessa Williams is returning to music with her first studio album in 15 years.

The US star has launched her own record label, Mellian Music, for the project, which is spearheaded by the single *Legs (Keep Dancing)*, out now.

"What a joy it is to be making new music behind the mike again with old friends," Williams says. "There's a certain comfort in creating new works in the studio while reminiscing about how so many years in this business have brought successes, excitement, and lasting memories.

"Always moving forward is what drives me. Every challenge is exciting. And more new music to share with my fans is the fuel that lights my fire."

Cat Kreidich, President, ADA Worldwide – Warner Music Group's independent label and artist services arm, which has partnered with the star on the project – adds: "A true multi-hyphenate and savvy businesswoman, there's not much Vanessa can't do.

"We're looking forward to supporting this exciting next chapter of her career, connecting her with fans who are eagerly awaiting her return to music, and introducing a whole new generation to the magic that is Vanessa Williams."

Fusing her experiences in pop, R&B, Latin, jazz and dance, the LP serves as a reintroduction to Williams, who released her last album, 'The Real Thing', in 2009.

Keep an eye on our website for further release details.

PHOTO MIKE RUIZ

SPICE GIRLS came together to celebrate **VICTORIA BECKHAM**'s 50th birthday with a performance of the classic *Stop*

LEMAR celebrated his birthday by releasing an EP of covers from his time on 'The Masked Singer UK'

CRAIG DAVID will return to the road with his 'Commitment' UK arena tour in 2025

BILLIE PIPER has ruled out a return to music while owing her former label Virgin a reported £9 million

LINE-UP NEWS

KYLIE'S GOING GLOBAL

Kylie Minogue is reportedly set to hit the road next year with a global run of dates.

According to industry insiders, the *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* singer will embark on a world tour throughout 2025, with shows across the UK and beyond.

They told The Sun's Bizarre column: "For fans, it's been an eternity coming. Kylie will finally go on a massive world tour in 2025.

"Plans are currently being drawn up for arena shows up and down the UK."

It comes amid reports that Kylie – who recently wrapped her residency at Las Vegas' Voltaire venue – is working on two new albums; a repackage of her latest, chart-topping LP 'Tension', with a bunch of new tracks, and a "full-on dance" 17th album.

"Kylie has made it clear to her team this is no time to slow down," sources added. "Plans are already in motion for the next two albums, one of which will be a repackage of 'Tension' with additional songs.

"As for the direction of album 17 it's early days — but a full-on dance album is in the works.

"The plan is to release the 'Tension' repackage towards the end of the year, with probably up to five new tracks."

It comes as Kylie hinted she may experiment with indie-folk for her next release, and admitted it is one of her "happy places".

The BRITs Global Icon winner – who took home the prize and performed a medley of hits during this year's show – confessed: "I just listen to playlists of one song I like, which leads me down this trippy path.

"Who should I seek out tonight? Just putting it out there that indie-pop-folk is one of my happy places."

Keep an eye on our website for all the Kylie latest.

PHOTO BBC_SARAH JEYNES

MIKE NOLAN QUITS THE FIZZ

Mike Nolan will leave The Fizz later this year after more than 40 years with the 1981 Eurovision winners.

The singer, who helped Bucks Fizz score classic hits such as *Making Your Mind Up*, *Piece Of The Action*, *The Land Of Make Believe*, *My Camera Never Lies* and *Now Those Days Are Gone*, confirmed his exit during an interview on BBC Radio 2.

Citing "personal reasons" for his departure later this year, he told Michael Ball: "I have decided to go, to leave. I've been thinking about it for a long, long time and I just thought, 'This is the time to do it'.

"It's 43 years we've been together, it's a long time, and there's probably 10 years left in us yet, but..."

Asked what his departure means for the future of the group, Cheryl and Jay confirmed they plan to continue, with the former sharing: "We'll replace Mike with one or possibly two other guys – they have to be of a certain age, that's the thing – so anyone out there..."

Taking to social media, the group shared: "We can confirm, following the Michael Ball show, that Mike will be leaving the group at the end of the year. Cheryl and Jay will be continuing as 'The Fizz' and a statement from Mike, will follow in the coming days. Thank you all for your understanding."

Before his exit, the group are returning to the indigo at The O2 stage for a summer 2024 headline show on June 28. Tickets are on sale now.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

IN THE LOOP

- **MARCELLA DETROIT**'s solo album 'Jewel' will get an expanded reissue for its 30th anniversary
- **DANIEL BEDINGFIELD** is working on a remake of *Gotta Get Thru This*
- **ABBA** Voyage is reportedly heading across the pond to Las Vegas
- ***NSYNC** are reportedly planning a reunion tour after **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE**'s solo run

TAKE THAT'S MALTA WEEKENDER

Take That have shared the line-up for their weekend-long event in Malta later this year.

The group is heading to the Mediterranean island between October 17 and 20 for the weekender, which will feature live concerts and nightclub events, including two headline sets from the band and other huge artists, who will perform in an intimate environment with a full scale production.

Alongside a greatest hits set, Take That will also perform their iconic second album 'Everything Changes' (1993) – featuring singles such as *Pray*, *Relight My Fire* and *Babe* – in full.

Joining the iconic trio across the four-day festival are Sugababes, Ella Henderson, Gok Wan, Sam Ryder, Daniel Bedingfield, Heather Small, and more yet to be announced.

"THATTERS! This is big... This October, join us on the Mediterranean island of Malta for The Greatest Weekend," the group shared on Instagram. **Tickets are on sale now.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Katy Perry teases 'fun' new record

Katy Perry's new album is filled with "pure joy and fun".

The US superstar is preparing to release her first LP since 2020's 'Smile' – featuring the singles *Never Really Over* and *Daisies* – and in a new interview behind the scenes of 'American Idol', she revealed the record is inspired by her feeling "really happy and whole".

She told Access Hollywood: "I just have yet to make a record from a place of feeling really happy and whole and full of love.

"Sometimes artists are like, 'Oh, that's boring, you want to make music from kind of like a tougher place,' but actually it's very bright and joyful, like pure joy and fun and playful and celebratory and a party."

Insiders recently revealed Katy – who wrapped her 'Play' Las Vegas residency earlier this year – is planning to hit the road alongside the new album release.

"Katy has been working on her most personal album ever for much of the past two years," sources shared. "She has been doing it on her own terms and it is quite different from anything she has released before.

"But after so long spent on the West Coast of the US, she feels ready to tour again. The demand is there because she has so many hits, so taking her show on the road is bound to be a big draw.

"The hope is that she can head out towards the end of 2024, but it is still being worked out."

We'll share details online when we have them.

PHOTO ART STREIBER

ULTRAVOX star **CHRIS CROSS** has died aged 71

CASCADA will release 'Studio 24', their first album in 13 years, in the autumn

LADY GAGA's new album features some of her "best music", according to the star

WET WET WET and **HEATHER SMALL** will hit the road together for a 2025 UK tour

As **Madonna** revisits 40 years of success with her global 'Celebration Tour', the hosts of the Inside The Groove podcast explore how she became an icon and the most successful solo female recording artist on the planet!

INSIDE THE GROOVE

● *For more Madonna, listen to Inside The Groove wherever you get your podcasts.*

WORDS EDWARD RUSSELL, JONATHAN PRYCE & PETER FALLOON **PHOTO** PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

REBEL HEART RELEASED: March 2015

If 'MDNA' had suffered from Madonna's lack of investment, the opposite can be said of 'Rebel Heart', which became the first album where its creation was documented via social media. In fact, her openness may almost have led to the derailment of the project.

Trying a very different approach, Madonna and her management set up a songwriting camp at Henson Studios in Hollywood, where Swedish songwriter and producer Tim Bergling - better known as Avicii - split his time between two groups who, over a week, wrote 11 songs. Typically, Madonna would arrive mid-afternoon and share her time with both groups, refining melodies and lyrics.

Taking to Instagram, she soon shared the words "Rebel Heart" to her page, along with a picture of a sunset. Given that she also repeatedly posted the word "Magic", fans were unsure whether this was the name of the album, a song, or something else altogether.

Whilst Avicii continued to work on the demos, Madonna worked with other producers including US DJ Diplo, who she had met earlier that year. These various sessions resulted in songs that would go on to be future singles, including *Bitch I'm Madonna* and *Living For Love*, which went from a piano ballad, to a '90s-style house track and even EDM, before they eventually settled on a style that fused all three versions together.

With Avicii no longer available due to health concerns, Diplo began reworking some of the tracks they had originally recorded, with the resulting album split between songs that reflected her rebellious nature and those that focused on the heart – her love songs.

Enough tracks were recorded for a double album, but plans were scuppered when, in November 2014, a handful of songs were leaked onto the Internet, after which she officially released six to streaming platforms - calling the package an early Christmas present - while further versions were also illegally spread online just a few days before Christmas.

By January, Israeli Adi Lederman was arrested for the leak and was subsequently sentenced to five years in jail. However, by now, Madonna's plan to release the album split between the Rebel and the Heart side was abandoned.

Her bad luck continued, with the infamous Capegate incident at the BRIT Awards in February, which had the singer pulled backwards down a set of steps during her performance of *Living For Love*.

Leaks and falls aside, the album was much more warmly received by fans and critics than its predecessor, with songs like *Joan of Arc* and *Ghosttown* being some of her most pop-friendly tracks since the 'Confessions' album.

Madonna again turned to Mert and Marcus to photograph the album's cover with a selection of images that presumably reflected the original plan for the album to have two distinct sections. Some of the shots featured Madonna's face bound by black wire, whilst others echoed back to classic Hollywood with Madonna once again resembling Marilyn Monroe. The album's designer, Giovanni Bianco, drew the title by hand, which on some variants appeared as a tattoo on Madonna's arm.

MADAME X RELEASED: June 2019

Despite the relative success of 'Rebel Heart', the album's singles had failed to generate a radio hit, with her manager, Guy Osery, citing ageism as the reason behind *Ghosttown*'s relatively poor performance with younger listeners.

However, as Madonna turned 60 she felt freed from commercial expectations and instead opted to make music that reflected where she was in her life, gave voice to what she needed to say, and felt more experimental than anything she had previously created.

The singer had relocated to Portugal in 2017, in search of a top academy for her son, David Banda, who wanted to be a professional footballer. Despite initially enjoying living in the capital, Lisbon, she began to feel lonely until she was introduced to the local music scene by activist and musician, Dino D'Santiago.

She began frequenting "living room sessions" where artists would come together to eat, chat and perform music in the local Fado genre - and although Madonna hadn't planned to record an album, she ended up sending producer Mirwais, who she had worked with on 'Music' and 'American Life', samples of guitar and vocals that she had snatched, which he returned as fleshed-out ideas.

By January 2018, the singer announced that it "feels so good to be working on music again", while a few months later she performed a new song, *Beautiful Game*, as part of a medley at the Met Gala in New York. An early version of the song *Dark Ballet*, this was the first taste of the upcoming release.

Madonna would again collaborate with a number of different producers and artists on the album, including songwriter Starrah, Brazilian singer Anitta, and following a meeting at the MTV VMA Awards in 2018, she also invited Colombian performer Maluma to duet with her.

With a range of styles on the album which included '70s disco, '90s house, Latin and even Cape Verdean collective of drummers, Batukadeiras Orchestra, she was again tasked with creating a cohesive sound for the record. This time, she opted to make it a concept record, calling the album after its central persona, 'Madame X'.

Lead single, *Medellin*, arrived in April at the same time that the album became available for pre-order. Her most experimental LP to date, it has also been her least commercially successful – so far selling around a half a million copies. However, now over 40 years into her career, it's safe to say Madonna has nothing to prove.

Her sell-out 'Celebration Tour' spanned 80 dates, ending with an enormous open-air concert on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and who knows what Madonna will do next? But as she herself said: "Don't ever tell me to stop!"

The cover artwork was shot by Steven Klein, who created a number of variations for the releases. The primary cover featured Madonna with dark hair and pale skin – her lips sewn shut with the words "Madame X". The singer said that she was depicting her own mother, whose lips were also sewn shut when she died. Another version of the album cover features Madonna as a Russian revolutionary, with a third variant showing the performer with a guitar against a wall of blue tiles.

EUROVISION

SONG CONTEST

MALMÖ 2024

Welcome to Malmö!

For the past few weeks, the Swedish city of Malmö has been abuzz with all things **Eurovision**!

At the end of April, Swedish broadcaster SVT finally unveiled the finished stage for the 68th Eurovision Song Contest!

The result of approximately six months of design, construction and beautification work, the set plays host to the 37 artists competing at the 2024 Contest, who flew in for rehearsals starting on the morning of Saturday, April 27.

It features movable LED cubes, LED floors, light, video and stage technology, all of which combine to create spectacular variations in the arena, with a runway extending into the middle of the audience, shaped like a cross, creating a unique 360-degree experience for the audience and viewers at home.

The stage sits amongst 2,168 lighting fixtures, each of which has a LED or laser source and took four weeks of pre-programming. LED is a major component in the production, with around 1,000 square metres of screen, including 186 square metres on the floor alone, and an additional 340 square metres on the backdrop.

Hanging from the ceiling are five LED cubes, contributing a combined 460 square metres and packing in 204 tonnes of technical gear that is suspended from the Malmö Arena ceiling, positioned and moved via a 196 variable speed hoist.

The creative talents behind the concept are Florian Wieder, Production Designer, and Fredrik Stormby, Light and Screen Content Designer.

PHOTO PEPPE ANDERSSON

The Eurovision Song Contest takes place in Malmö, Sweden on Tuesday, May 7 (First Semi-Final), Thursday, May 9 (Second Semi-Final) and Saturday, May 11 (Grand Final) 2024!

Eurovision stars hit back at boycott calls

Performers from this year's Eurovision Song Contest have issued a joint statement about their participation in the competition, following calls from hundreds of queer artists, individuals and organisations to boycott in light of Israel's participation amid conflict with Palestine.

The UK's Olly Alexander - alongside Denmark's SABA, Finland's Windows95Man, Ireland's Bambie Thug, Lithuania's Silvester Belt, Norway's Gåte, Portugal's Iolanda, San Marino's Megara and Switzerland's Nemo - is among those who have signed a letter giving their response.

"We want to begin by acknowledging the privilege of taking part in Eurovision," they say. "In light of the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and particularly in Gaza, and in Israel, we do not feel comfortable being silent. It is important to us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and communicate our heartfelt wish for peace, an immediate and lasting ceasefire, and the safe return of all hostages.

"We stand united against all forms of hate, including antisemitism and islamophobia."

The letter continues: "We firmly believe in the unifying power of music, enabling people to transcend differences and foster meaningful conversations and connections," it continues.

"We feel that it is our duty to create and uphold this space, with a strong hope that it will inspire greater compassion and empathy."

In response to the statement, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) says it "welcomes" their stance, adding: "However, by participating in Eurovision alongside apartheid Israel while it carries out its live-streamed genocide against 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, armed and enabled by many European governments, the contestants would be complicit in artwashing these crimes.

"Feigning symbolic gestures of support while dismissing the call of the oppressed reflects a patronising and colonial attitude on the part of the contestants that is familiar to Palestinians, and many oppressed communities globally.

"Israel is defying the World Court and the UN Security council. This means everyone has a responsibility to end complicity in supporting or covering up its crimes.

"We call on all Eurovision contestants to withdraw from the contest, as a meaningful gesture of solidarity and to fulfil this moral responsibility to do no harm."

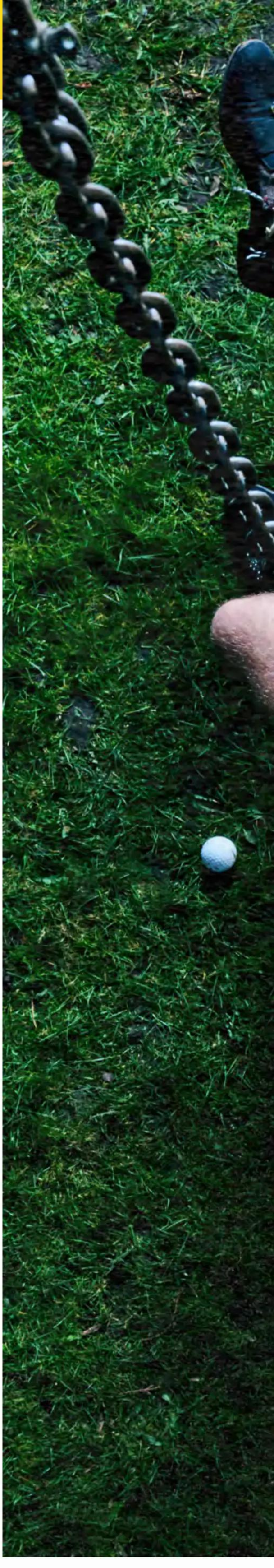
Olly also issued a direct response to Queers For Palestine, which "sent [him] their letter asking [him] to withdraw from the ESC earlier this week", he shared in a social media post.

"I wholeheartedly support action being taken to demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the return of all hostages and the safety and security of all civilians in Palestine and Israel," his statement begins.

"I know some people will choose to boycott this year's Eurovision and I understand and respect their decision. As a participant I've taken a lot of time to deliberate over what to do and the options available to me.

"It is my current belief that removing myself from the contest wouldn't bring us any closer to our shared goal. Instead, I've been speaking with some of the other EV contestants and we've decided that by taking part we can use our platform to come together and call for peace.

"I hope and pray that our calls are answered and there is an end to the atrocities we are seeing taking place in Gaza. I'd like to thank the many signatories of this letter whose work I deeply admire and respect and hope that we can continue to work together in creating a better world for all of us." **RP**



> “IT IS MY CURRENT BELIEF THAT REMOVING MYSELF FROM THE CONTEST WOULDN’T BRING US ANY CLOSER TO OUR SHARED GOAL.”
>
> **OLLY ALEXANDER**

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST MALMÖ 2024

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

It may be all about the 37 entities competing for the trophy, but there's plenty more to look forward to during Eurovision week!

SEMI-FINALS

The tension is high for the performers, with this year's entries whittled down from 37 to just 26, but the Semi-Finals are also an introduction to the main event and bring with them more of the best of Eurovision entertainment!

SEMI-FINAL 1

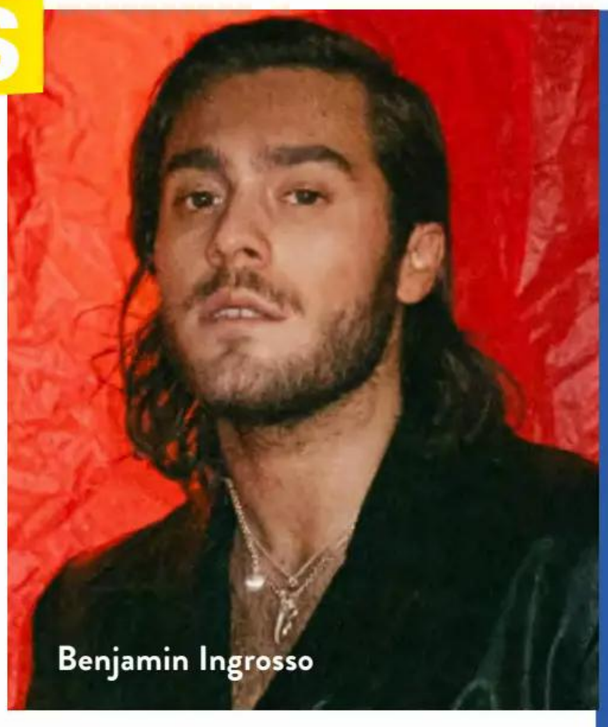
TUESDAY, MAY 7

Launching Semi-Final 1 are three icons of Eurovision Song Contests past - **Eleni Foureira**, **Eric Saade** and **Chanel** - who will be performing the *United By Music* opening number.

Also during the show, Sweden's Eurovision 2018 singer, **Benjamin Ingrosso**, will take to the stage as part of a 21-person "super medley" that promises to be "of the highest international class".

"After I got to represent Sweden at Eurovision in 2018, it now feels great to be able to show the audience who I am today," he beams in a statement. "It has been fantastic to meet all the fans on my tour in Europe during the spring and now I hope that the Eurovision audience will love this show as much as I do."

The EBU says to expect "the band, the dancers, the lights, the image production and specially constructed videos in the background".



Benjamin Ingrosso

SEMI-FINAL 2

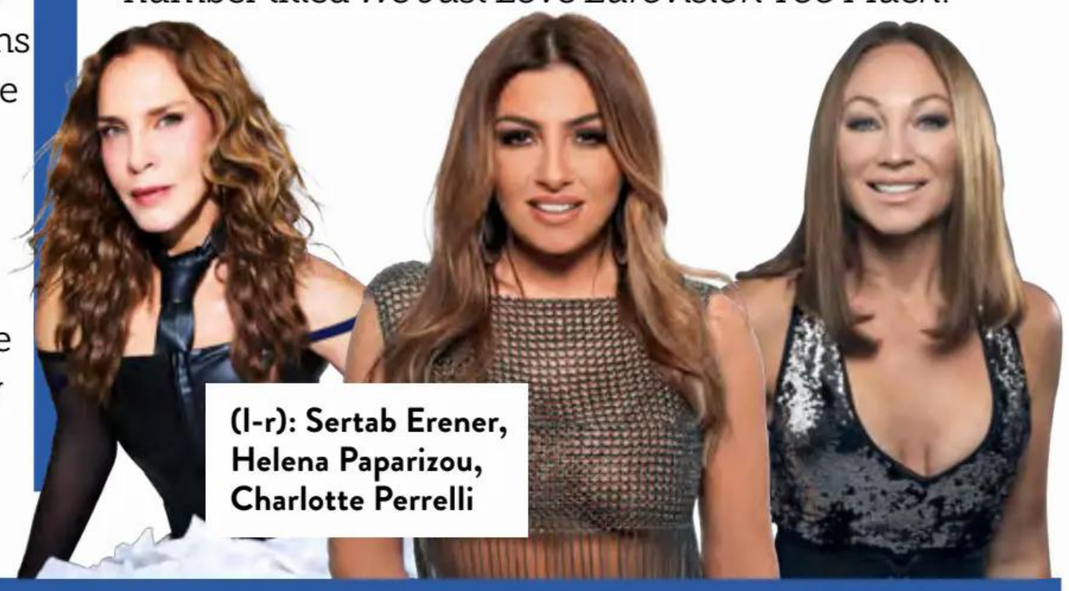
THURSDAY, MAY 9

Taking to the stage during the second Semi-Final is Eurovision 2003 winner, **Sertab Erener**, with the Turkish superstar set to perform as part of The World's Biggest Sing-Along.

Beyond the *Every Way That I Can* hitmaker, the sing-along will include Eurovision 2005 winner **Helena Paparizou**, who won for Greece but was born in Sweden, and **Charlotte Perrelli**, who won Eurovision in 1999 — 25 years ago — with *Take Me To Your Heaven*.

Both Helena and Charlotte returned to Eurovision in later years, with the former competing in 2014 with the song *Survivor*, which finished fourth, and the latter appearing in 2008 with *Hero*.

Additionally, host **Petra Mede** will perform a musical number titled *We Just Love Eurovision Too Much*.



(l-r): Sertab Erener, Helena Paparizou, Charlotte Perrelli

JOHNNY LOGAN RETURNS

Two-time Eurovision winner Johnny Logan is back and will perform during the first Semi-Final!

He was the first artist to win the Eurovision Song Contest twice for Ireland with *What's Another Year* (1980) and *Hold Me Now* (1987), and later as a songwriter in 1992 with Linda Martin's *Why Me?*.

On the back of Loreen's second victory with last year's *Tattoo* - following her 2012 win with *Euphoria* - SVT are celebrating the feat with the original double threat.

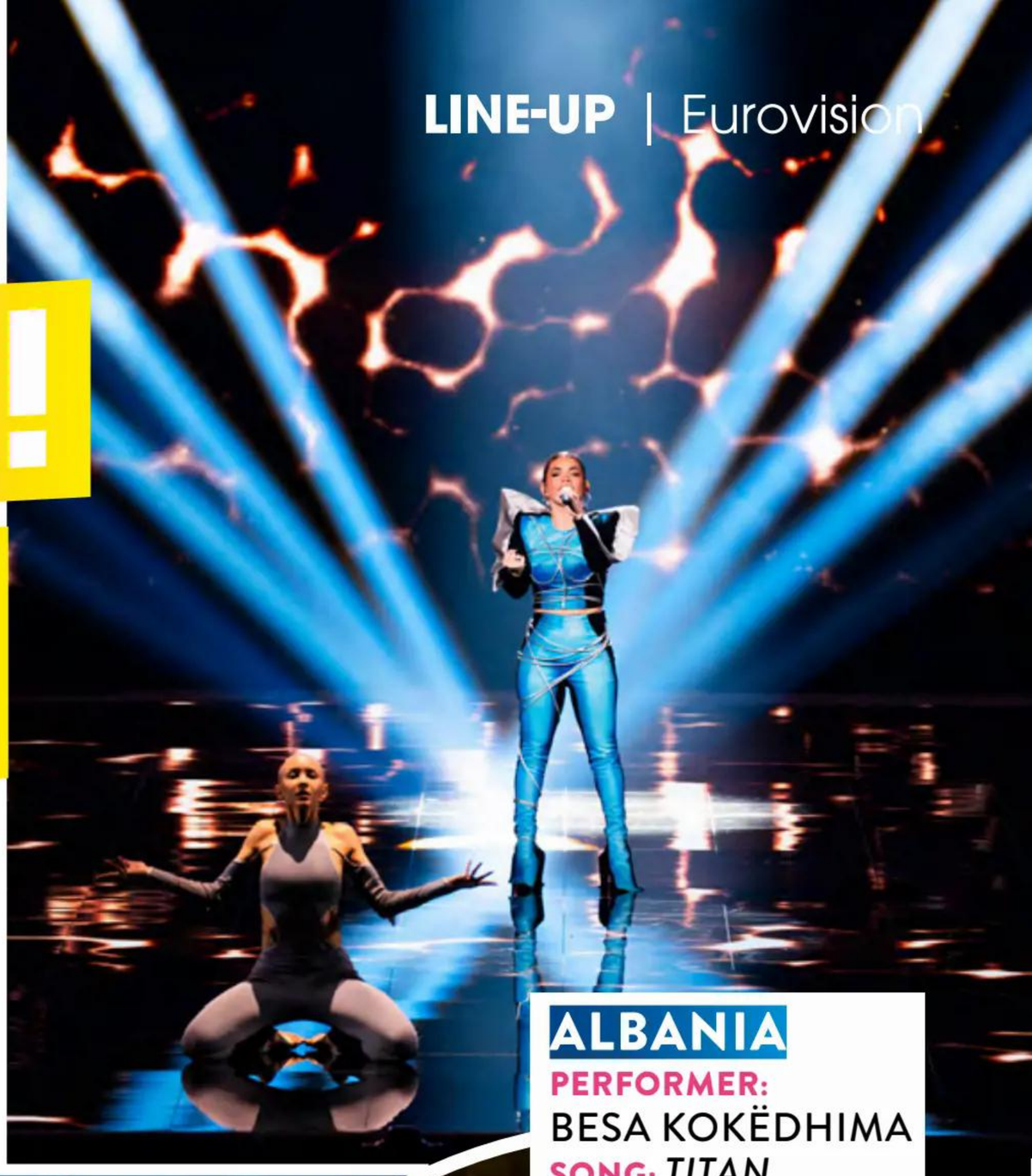
Logan says: "I am extremely honoured and excited to have been asked to perform as a guest on 7 May at the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmo. Sweden has won 7 times, as has Ireland.

"To be asked to represent my country one final time is something very special for me and I'm very grateful to all involved with the decision. I'm really looking forward to being back on the Eurovision stage as a guest this time and not a contestant."

PHOTOS JACOB RANGNITT, ERDI DOĞAN, TRYFONAS NAKIS, MIKAEL KENTA, KRESTINE

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Ahead of the big night, all 37 performers arrived at the Malmö Arena to unveil their spectacular staging for the very first time!



ALBANIA
PERFORMER: BESA KOKËDHIMA
SONG: *TITAN*

AZERBAIJAN
PERFORMER: FAHREE FT. ILKIN DOVLATOV
SONG: *ÖZÜNLƏ APAR*

ARMENIA
PERFORMER: LADANIVA
SONG: *JAKO*

AUSTRIA
PERFORMER: KALEEN
SONG: *WE WILL RAVE*

AUSTRALIA
PERFORMER: ELECTRIC FIELDS
SONG: *ONE MILKALI (ONE BLOOD)*

BELGIUM
PERFORMER: MUSTII
SONG: *BEFORE THE PARTY'S OVER*

EUROVISION
SONG CONTEST
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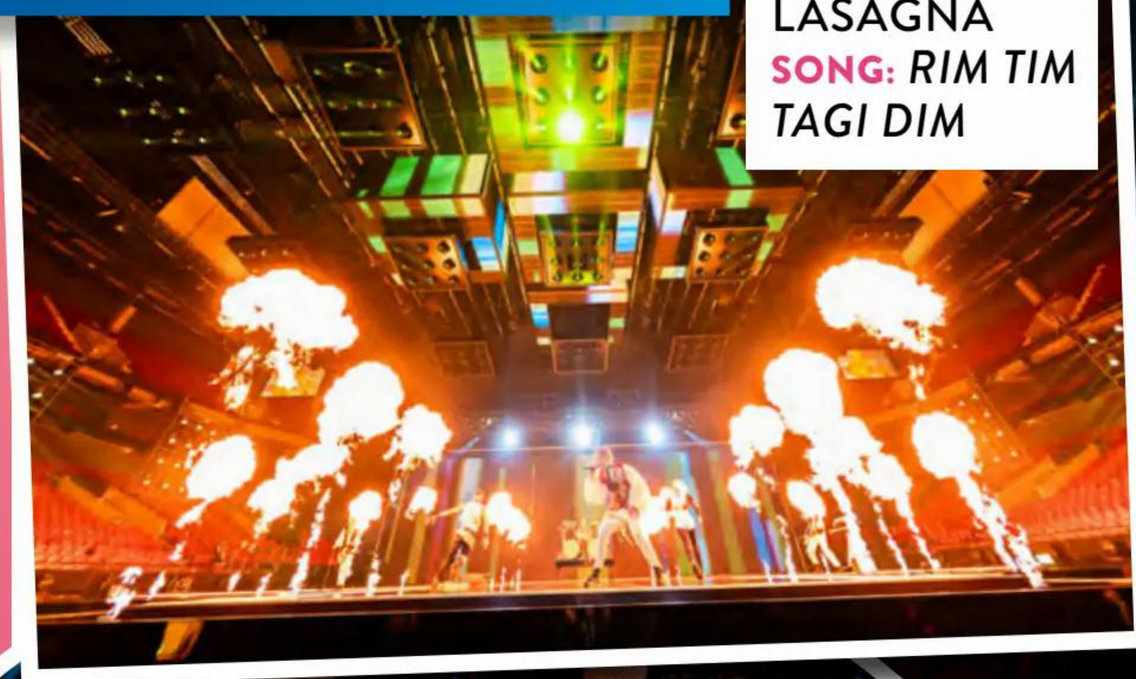
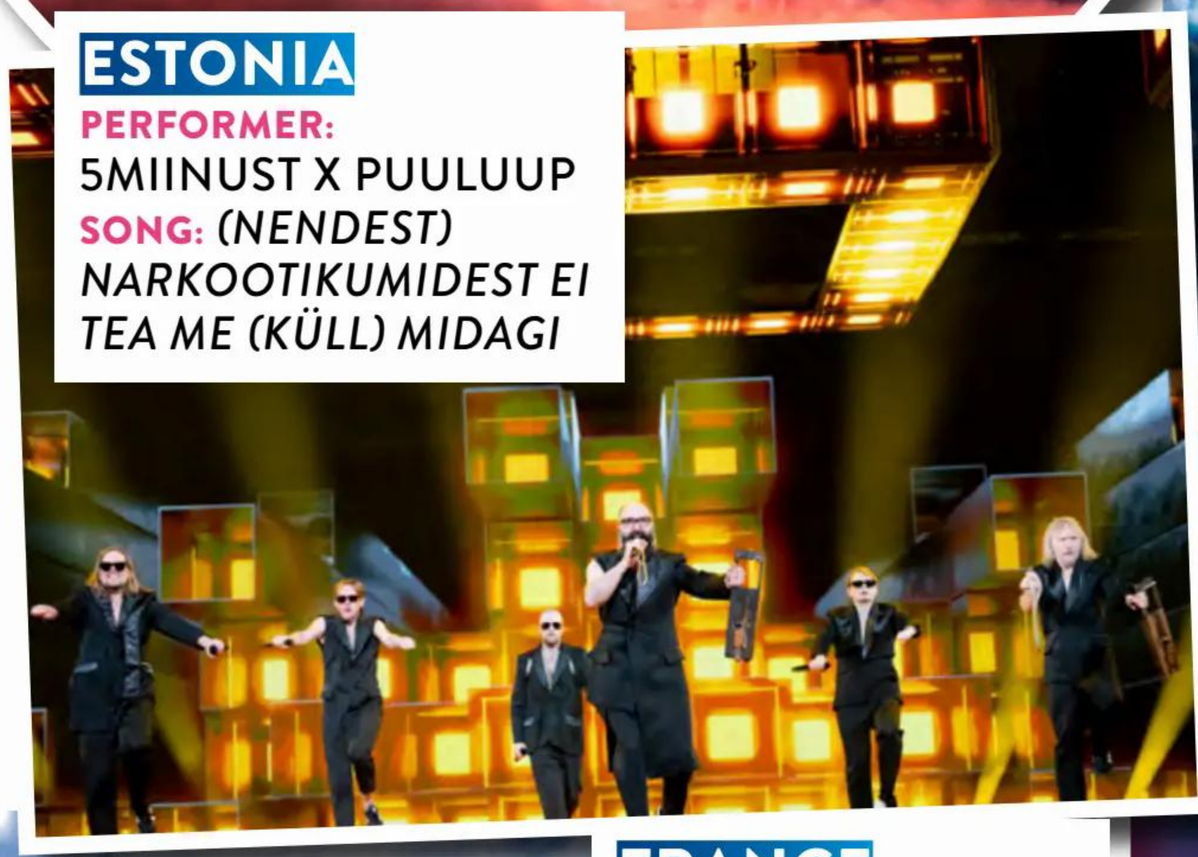


CROATIA
PERFORMER: BABY LASAGNA
SONG: *RIM TIM TAGI DIM*

CYPRUS
PERFORMER: SILIA KAPSIS
SONG: *LIAR*

DENMARK
PERFORMER: SABA
SONG: *SAND*

CZECHIA
PERFORMER: AIKO
SONG: *PEDESTAL*



ESTONIA
PERFORMER: 5MIINUST X PUULUUP
SONG: *(NENDEST) NARKOOTIKUMIDEST EI TEA ME (KÜLL) MIDAGI*

FINLAND
PERFORMER: WINDOWS95MAN
SONG: *NO RULES*

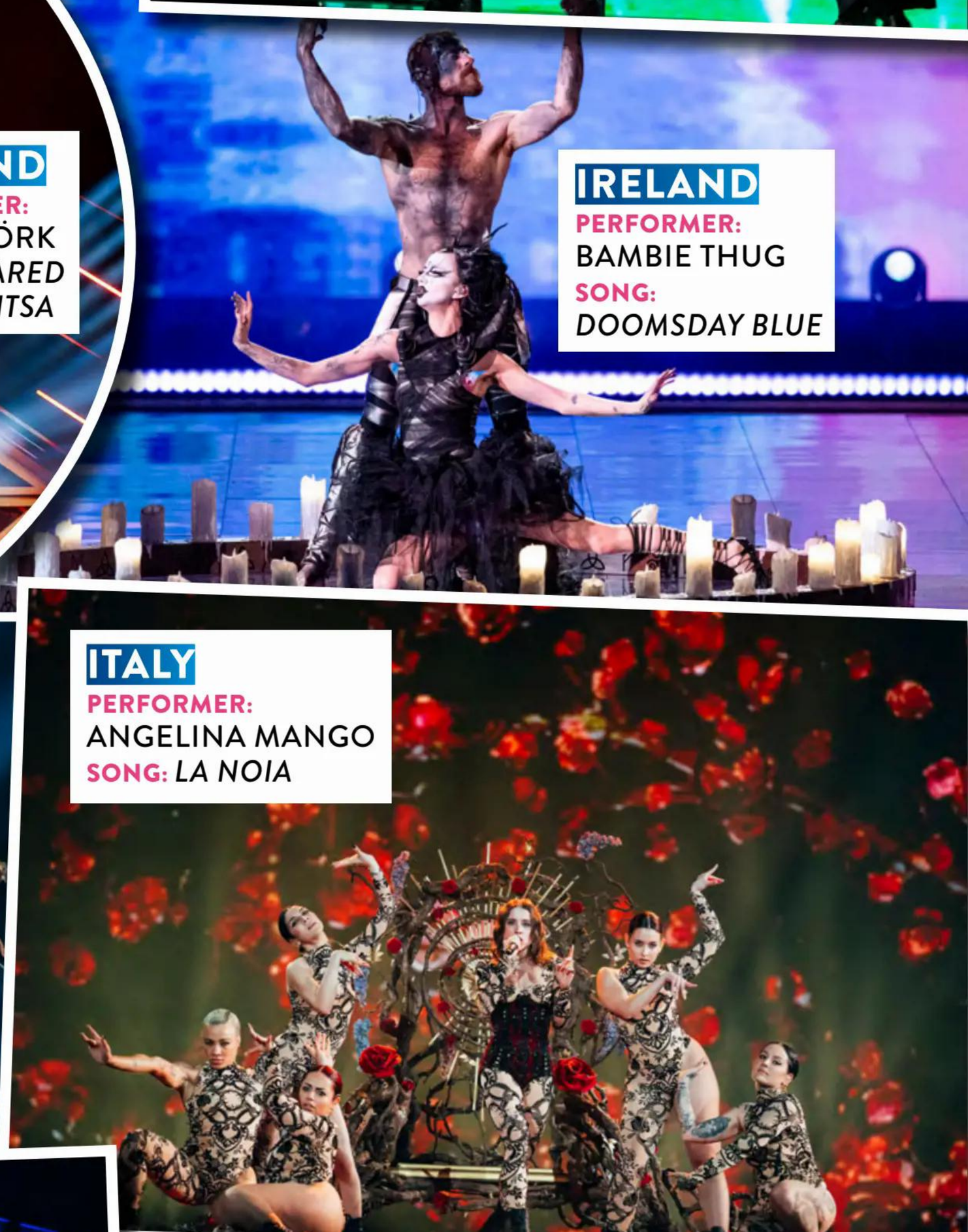
FRANCE
PERFORMER: SLIMANE
SONG: *MON AMOUR*

GEORGIA
PERFORMER: NUTSA BUZALADZE
SONG: *FIREFIGHTER*

GERMANY
PERFORMER: ISAAK
SONG: *ALWAYS ON THE RUN*

GREECE
PERFORMER: MARINA SATTI
SONG: *ZARI*

ICELAND
PERFORMER: HERA BJÖRK
SONG: *SCARED OF HEIGHTSA*



IRELAND
PERFORMER: BAMBIE THUG
SONG: *DOOMSDAY BLUE*

ISRAEL
PERFORMER: EDEN GOLAN
SONG: *HURRICANE*

ITALY
PERFORMER: ANGELINA MANGO
SONG: *LA NOIA*

LATVIA
PERFORMER: DONS
SONG: *HOLLOW*

LITHUANIA
PERFORMER: SILVESTER BELT
SONG: *LUKTELK*

EUROVISION
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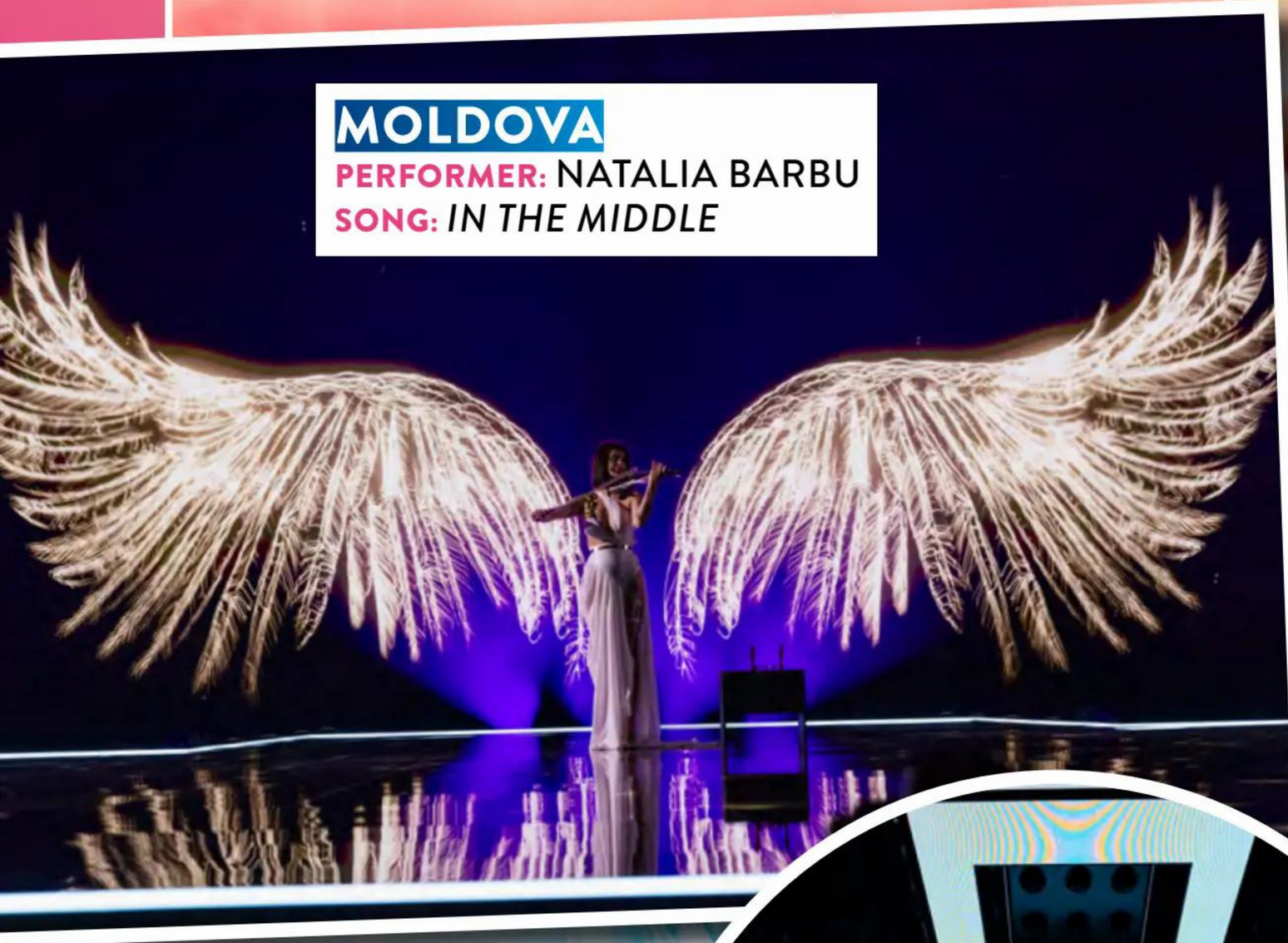
MALTA
PERFORMER: SARAH BONNICI
SONG: *LOOP*

LUXEMBOURG
PERFORMER: TALI
SONG: *FIGHTER*

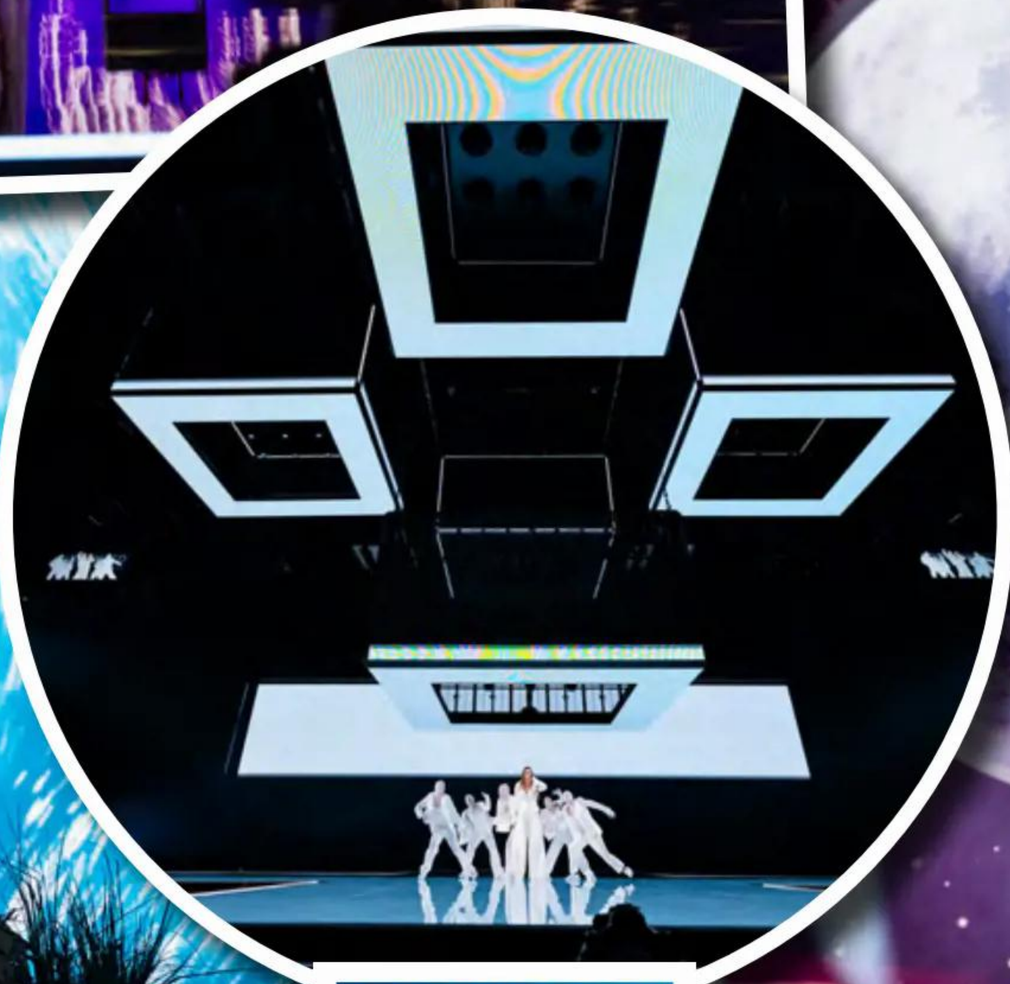
THE NETHERLANDS
PERFORMER: JOOST KLEIN
SONG: *EUROPAPA*

MOLDOVA
PERFORMER: NATALIA BARBU
SONG: *IN THE MIDDLE*



POLAND
PERFORMER: LUNA
SONG: *THE TOWER*

NORWAY
PERFORMER: GÅTE
SONG: *ULVEHAM*



PORTUGAL
PERFORMER: IOLANDA
SONG: *GRITO*

PHOTOS CORINNE CUMMING / SARAH LOUISE BENNETT / EBU

SAN MARINO
PERFORMER: MEGARA
SONG: *11:11*

SERBIA
PERFORMER:
TEYA DORA
SONG: *RAMONDA*

SLOVENIA
PERFORMER:
RAIVEN
SONG:
VERONIKA

SPAIN
PERFORMER: NEBULOSSA
SONG: *ZORRA*

SWITZERLAND
PERFORMER: NEMO
SONG: *THE CODE*

SWEDEN
PERFORMER: MARCUS & MARTINUS
SONG: *UNFORGETTABLE*

UKRAINE
PERFORMER: ALYONA ALYONA & JERRY HEIL
SONG: *TERESA & MARIA*

UNITED KINGDOM
PERFORMER:
OLLY ALEXANDER
SONG: *DIZZY*

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
MALMÖ 2024

EXCLUSIVE

Sweden: Marcus & Martinus

Last year, Marcus & Martinus finished second place at Sweden's Melodifestivalen with *Air*, with returning champion Loreen making it through to the final stages of the Eurovision Song Contest where she became the first female artist to take home the trophy twice.

Undeterred, they returned once more this year and with a new song, *Unforgettable*, in tow, the twins came out on top and have the honour of representing the country on home turf at the Malmö Arena. It all worked out for the best, says Martinus: "I love *Air*, but *Unforgettable* is more us and it's more Eurovision. I feel like it's an upgrade."

They're not the only ones that think so; 12 songs took part in the final of Melodifestivalen for the public and jury vote (split 50/50), with *Unforgettable* winning each with a huge margin. "We didn't know, the first time we went to Melodifestivalen, how huge it actually is," laughs Marcus, 22. "The support we got was incredible so we really wanted to do it again - because we felt like, as long as Loreen's not there, we have a chance!"

With a global audience of 162 million viewers last year alone, Eurovision is the biggest stage in music and, in Sweden, Martinus says it's equally as important in the pop sphere. It's a far cry from the UK's approach to the Contest in previous years. "And I

PHOTOS BBC/GUY LEVY

think that's so crazy," insists Marcus. "When you think about it being the biggest singing competition in the world. I guess it's something to do with people not wanting to be remembered as a Eurovision act and wanting to be known for something they've done themselves. But you shouldn't be ashamed to be remembered for taking part in the biggest singing competition in the whole world."

A change in fortunes with Sam Ryder's second-place 2022 finish with *Space Man* marked something of a turning point in the UK's 21st Century Eurovision journey, with this year's performer, Years & Years star Olly Alexander, hoping to reach similar heights with his hit *Dizzy*.

But Marcus has another suggestion to increase enthusiasm around Eurovision - which is how classic acts like Bucks Fizz, Katrina and Gina G made it to the stage. "The UK has such great artists and I feel like you should have a qualifier competition like we do in Sweden to make a bit more hype around it," he offers.

The boys are a fan of Olly's song this year and name Holland's entry *Europapa* by Joost Klein as their personal favourite. All three acts have had considerable success globally - Marcus & Martinus have released three studio albums (a fourth will arrive weeks after Eurovision), while also fronting two documentary films and two TV series - with the pair also playing the Malmö Arena earlier this year on their European tour.

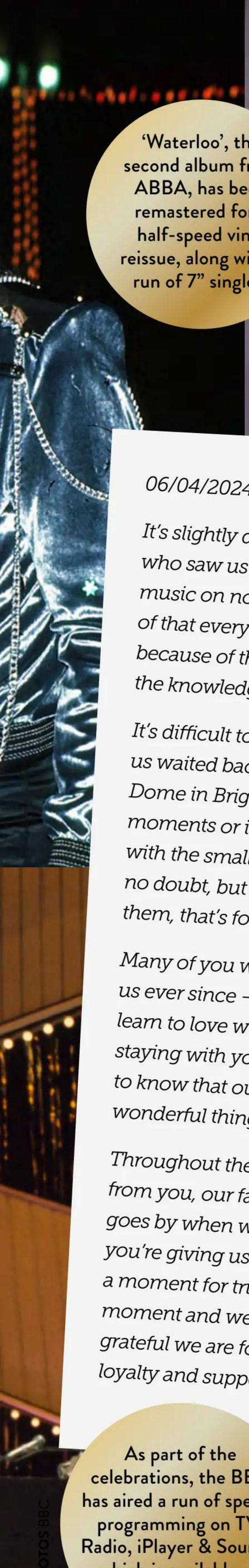
Now, they're in full Eurovision mode and as they prepare for the show, there's a few logistical issues to iron out. "We want it to look big and we're perfectionists, so we want to upgrade our outfits and there are other things we need to change because of the Eurovision rules," says Martinus, referring to the screens they use as part of the staging. "The walls are too tall; I think the maximum height is three metres and our walls are seven metres, so we have to do something there. But we're working on it, so we'll get it all through and it'll be bigger and better."

As the reigning winners, Sweden automatically qualify for the Grand Final and - 50 years since ABBA's iconic victory with *Waterloo* - Marcus & Martinus will perform first. "It's going to be such a weird feeling after so much hard work, to be first out and it all be over in two minutes and 50 seconds," admits Marcus, with Martnus adding: "We're going to be in the green room for two hours - by the end of the show we'll be super drunk!"

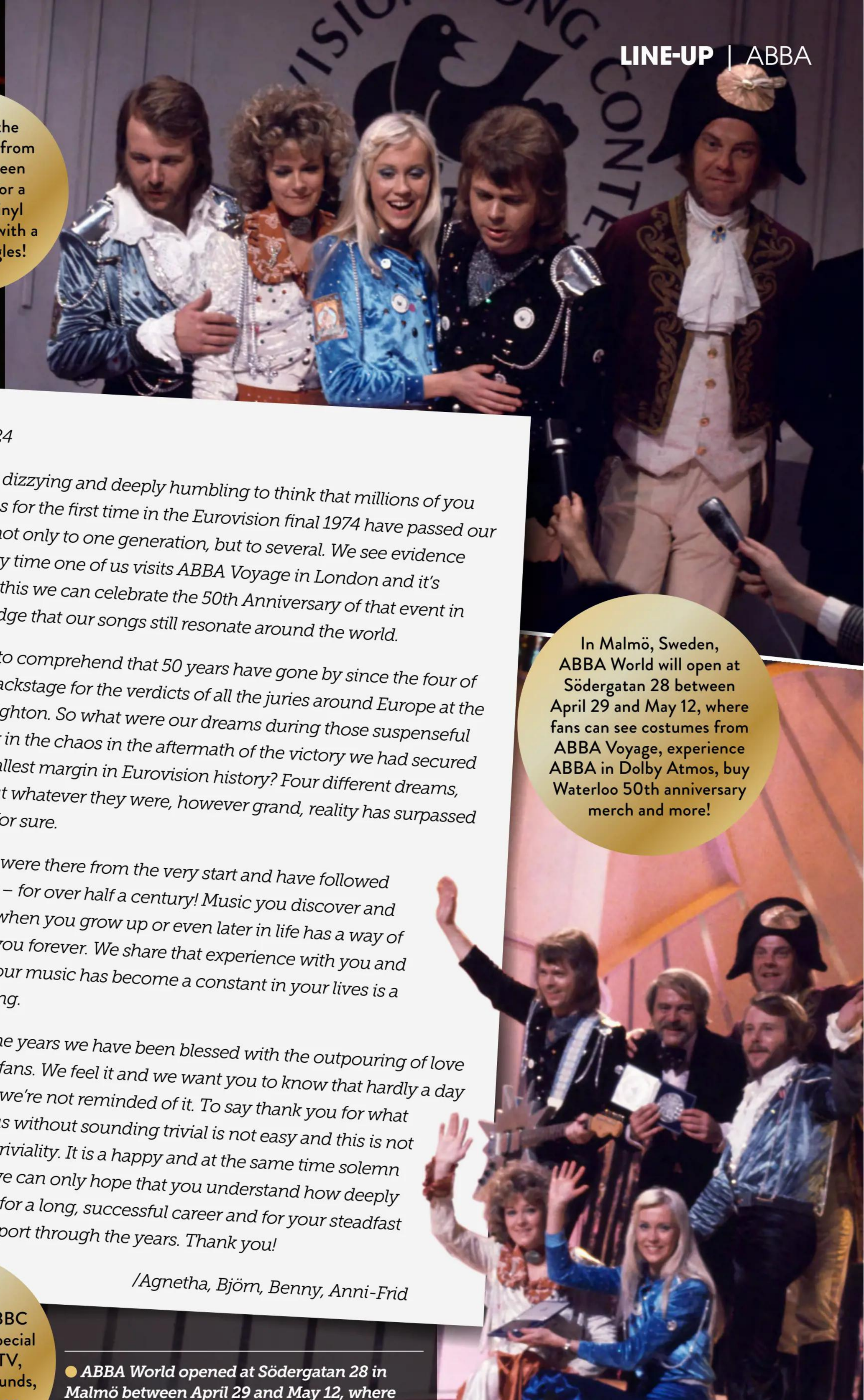
When it comes to their big moment, though, the boys are following Loreen's advice. "We talked to her at the Melodifestivalen final and she told us she really liked our performance," smiles Marcus, with Martinus agreeing: "She said that we killed it, so we're just gonna go out there and do our thing." **RP**

GOLD

Marking 50 years to the day since **ABBA** took to the stage at the Brighton Dome for their winning performance of *Waterloo* at the 19th Eurovision Song Contest, the group shared a letter to fans in celebration of the milestone!



'Waterloo', the second album from ABBA, has been remastered for a half-speed vinyl reissue, along with a run of 7" singles!



06/04/2024

It's slightly dizzying and deeply humbling to think that millions of you who saw us for the first time in the Eurovision final 1974 have passed our music on not only to one generation, but to several. We see evidence of that every time one of us visits ABBA Voyage in London and it's because of this we can celebrate the 50th Anniversary of that event in the knowledge that our songs still resonate around the world.

It's difficult to comprehend that 50 years have gone by since the four of us waited backstage for the verdicts of all the juries around Europe at the Dome in Brighton. So what were our dreams during those suspenseful moments or in the chaos in the aftermath of the victory we had secured with the smallest margin in Eurovision history? Four different dreams, no doubt, but whatever they were, however grand, reality has surpassed them, that's for sure.

Many of you were there from the very start and have followed us ever since – for over half a century! Music you discover and learn to love when you grow up or even later in life has a way of staying with you forever. We share that experience with you and to know that our music has become a constant in your lives is a wonderful thing.

Throughout the years we have been blessed with the outpouring of love from you, our fans. We feel it and we want you to know that hardly a day goes by when we're not reminded of it. To say thank you for what you're giving us without sounding trivial is not easy and this is not a moment for triviality. It is a happy and at the same time solemn moment and we can only hope that you understand how deeply grateful we are for a long, successful career and for your steadfast loyalty and support through the years. Thank you!

/Agnetha, Björn, Benny, Anni-Frid

In Malmö, Sweden, ABBA World will open at Södergatan 28 between April 29 and May 12, where fans can see costumes from ABBA Voyage, experience ABBA in Dolby Atmos, buy Waterloo 50th anniversary merch and more!

As part of the celebrations, the BBC has aired a run of special programming on TV, Radio, iPlayer & Sounds, which is available on catch-up now!

PHOTOS BBC

ABBA World opened at Södergatan 28 in Malmö between April 29 and May 12, where fans could see costumes from 'ABBA Voyage', experience ABBA in Dolby Atmos, buy Waterloo 50th anniversary merch and more!

Summer of love

Back for round two as Cupid, **Dannii Minogue** tells all about her "electric" new BBC series, 'I Kissed A Girl'!

Dannii Minogue returns to the Italian Masseria to play Cupid for a group of singles on her new BBC series, 'I Kissed A Girl'.

Streaming now on BBC iPlayer, the sequel to last year's 'I Kissed A Boy' sees 10 singles meet for the first time with a kiss, paving the way for a summer of love with a side-serving of drama.

Speaking about returning to the role, Dannii opens up on the "electric" series, getting to grips with "lesbian lingo" and why the show "feels brand new" compared to last year's offering.

'I Kissed A Boy' was the first gay dating show in the UK, and now it's back and doing it for the girls as the first UK dating series for girls who like girls! How does that feel?

We are so excited to be back and to share the stories of these girls. They are open and honest in their search for love, funny and surprising, so get ready for a whole rollercoaster of emotions. I genuinely laughed and cried watching all the antics in the Masseria.

How does this series compare to 'I Kissed A Boy'?

Although this is the same format, it feels brand new. The girls bring such a different energy and I feel stories of girls-who-like-girls have been sadly missing from so much of what we see on TV. While the girls open up to possible love, I think so many viewers will be both educated and entertained. As each day developed, it sparked a lot of heartfelt conversation on and off the set. With lots of queer females on the crew, it created an incredible environment that supported the cast and was a joy to be a part of.

What can we expect from the cast?

The girls are so much fun. They wore their hearts on their sleeve and they did not hold back – with their affections as well as their opinions. They are so diverse in their personalities and in what they are looking for in a partner. Just remember the old saying, "don't judge a book by its cover", as each episode reveals more and more about their vulnerability underneath the exterior.

What did you learn working with the girls?

I was on a learning curve with the boys, but with the girls, I actually needed a glossary of lesbian lingo to decode some of the conversations. In the best possible way, their language cuts to the chase – and I was happily catching up. You will know what I mean when you hear fun descriptions like 'golden retriever' and 'black cat'.

You work with the team on creating the brilliant Chemistry Tests. Tell us about the first one for the girls – Red Flags?

Red Flags leans into a saying that comes up in conversation regularly with the girls. We wanted to use this to find out what would turn each girl off or give her the 'ick'. It was a great way for the group to get to know each other in the early stages of their summer of love. This challenge absolutely turned the Masseria upside down and there were long moments of navigating a level of awkward I had never experienced before.

As well as all the feels, the girls bring a lot of drama to the Masseria. How gripping are the episodes this season?

The girls move fast, and every episode is electric with the last minutes of each episode leaving me wanting to know what was going to happen next. It is like trying to predict what will happen in a game of Snakes and Ladders! Impossible.

What makes this show so special?

The girls and their genuine search for love, with inhibitions left at home, we watch it all unfold in the sun-soaked romantic Italian landscape. In my role as 'Cupid' I always hope that an attraction sparks with such intensity that it leads to a lasting relationship – but my lips are sealed as to whether that happens this series. One thing I can tell you is that it was the ultimate lesbian summer holiday that the girls loved so much – I got the feeling they didn't want it to end. I am so so proud of these girls and can't wait for viewers to discover this groundbreaking and hugely entertaining series. **RP**

● ***'I Kissed A Girl' is available to watch now on BBC iPlayer. Episodes will air on BBC Three every Sunday and Monday night at 9pm BST.***

I WAS ON A LEARNING CURVE WITH THE BOYS, BUT WITH THE GIRLS, I ACTUALLY NEEDED A GLOSSARY OF LESBIAN LINGO

PHOTO BBC / TWOFOUR / CORINNE CUMMING

QUICK READ

DEEPER AND DEEPER

On his first album of original material in five years, **Will Young** enters a new era after more than 20 years in the business and reconnects with his passion for pop!

"I'm remembering my roots of pop and completely welcoming it," says Will Young while introducing his ninth studio album, 'Light It Up', and a body of work that harks back to his best-loved pop classics. "It's time to celebrate and have fun."

Now in the 22nd year of his career, the original 'Pop Idol' has proven to be one of British pop's best-loved and most consistent singer-songwriters, peaking in the Top 3 with all eight of his albums to date (including no less than four No. 1s) and taking five singles to the top of the charts too.

He's sold 10 million albums worldwide, won two BRITs and an Ivor Novello award, and been nominated for an Olivier, all while balancing his performing career with fronting hit podcasts and penning best-selling books in the LGBTQIA+ mental health and wellbeing space, connecting the multi-faceted star with his fans on various levels.

His recent role in Simon Stephens' one-man play, 'Songs From Far Away', proved to be a catalyst for his latest project. "It has been a brilliant thing to go back to the stage. I've managed to run the music alongside the acting," Will reflects.

"I think it did help me go towards the fun of making music even more. Performing a monologue night after night was invigorating and a huge challenge, yet so rewarding and energising."

Arriving two years after his 20th anniversary 'Greatest Hits' LP, 'Light It Up' sees the hitmaker reunited with Andy Cato of Groove Armada, along with his long-term writing partners Jim and Mima Elliot, and new collaborators, pHD - the Scandinavian pop production/writing duo that has worked with Kylie Minogue, Little Mix and One Direction, among others.

"I think for me it was about finally feeling more content and being able to go back to embracing joyous unashamed pop music," Will beams. "I get what a great pop song does. Probably coming from a talent show and the snobbery that has come with that over the years, I would sometimes rail against pop but now I love it."

Case in point: lead single, *Falling Deep*, bridges his love of '80s pop with today's commercial trends much like The Weeknd has on his recent, global chart-topping records, while also tapping into his musical theatre experience.

"IT FEELS EMPOWERING TO WRITE SONGS ABOUT WHAT IT IS TO BE MID-40S!"

"With this album, the training I've done in dance and acting has hugely helped for the filmed visuals," he reflects. "The song immediately made my mind go to the late '70s and early '80s. I wanted the fun and nostalgia of that time but to modernise it, and I'm so proud of the result."

When crafting the song's accompanying visuals, he was adamant to only feature dancers around his own age.

"I think sometimes there can be such a focus on youth in the dance world for all performers, and older performers come with such grace and wisdom," he says. "It was a fantastic day actually, working with people my age. We all knew what a Nintendo Gameboy was and I think especially women can be overlooked as they age, so it felt very important to work with men and women for the project".

Now in his 40s, Will explores and navigates various facets of everyday life across 10 songs; title track, the radio-friendly *Light It Up*, speaks to embracing your individuality, while introspective ballad *The Worst* reflects upon his darkest hours - including the devastation of losing twin brother Rupert to suicide in 2020 after two decades of alcoholism - for a song that "has a lot of pain in it and yet optimism and hope... [It's asking] Is this possible? Could I get over the line and be happy?"

Another number, the moody, electronic-pop gem *Midnight*, toes the line between wonderment at how he has gotten so old and also admission of repetitive mistakes late at night when he's alone, proving his ability to make light of such as he quips in one lyric: *'Why does no-one tell me they are married?'*

Harking back to the heavily pop-leaning 'Echoes' (2011) - Will's first collaboration with Richard X - he says: "I really hope this is the go-to pop album for a dance, for a cry and for a celebration. I know I do all three with it."

"It feels empowering to write songs about what it is to be mid-40s, in a different shape, still frustrated with certain aspects of my life," Will said. "It's

fun to embrace my age and not think I have to be ever youthful. I'm clearly not!"

To accompany the new album, Will will embark upon a 50-date national tour, playing places he hasn't previously covered, launching September 3 in Southend and wrapping November 26 in London. "I'm very excited about touring at the end of the year and I will be going to a lot of places I haven't been as I wanted to go to smaller venues, so I could properly get around the country rather than just playing the big cities. That will be really fun," he says. "Plus, I've visited most bric-a-brac shops, so I need to break fresh ground. I'm hoping the tour will basically be a pop version of the antiques road trip!"

Throughout his two-decades-plus career, Will has performed across eight sell-out tours and appeared on the biggest line-ups in the country - including three appearances at Glastonbury - but his latest endeavour is less about the numbers and more a celebration of reconnecting with his passion for pop music with renewed vigour.

"Whatever I do," Will contemplates, "I can finally connect to the fun of it all and that is a place I never thought I would get back to, so I'll take it.

"It has been such a tough time and to be out the other side, it is just so exciting to produce a complete pop album. The crafting of pop music can be so fun and the challenge to sing those songs is something I've relished." **RP**

● *'Light It Up' is out August 9 on BMG. Tickets for Will's UK tour are on sale now.*

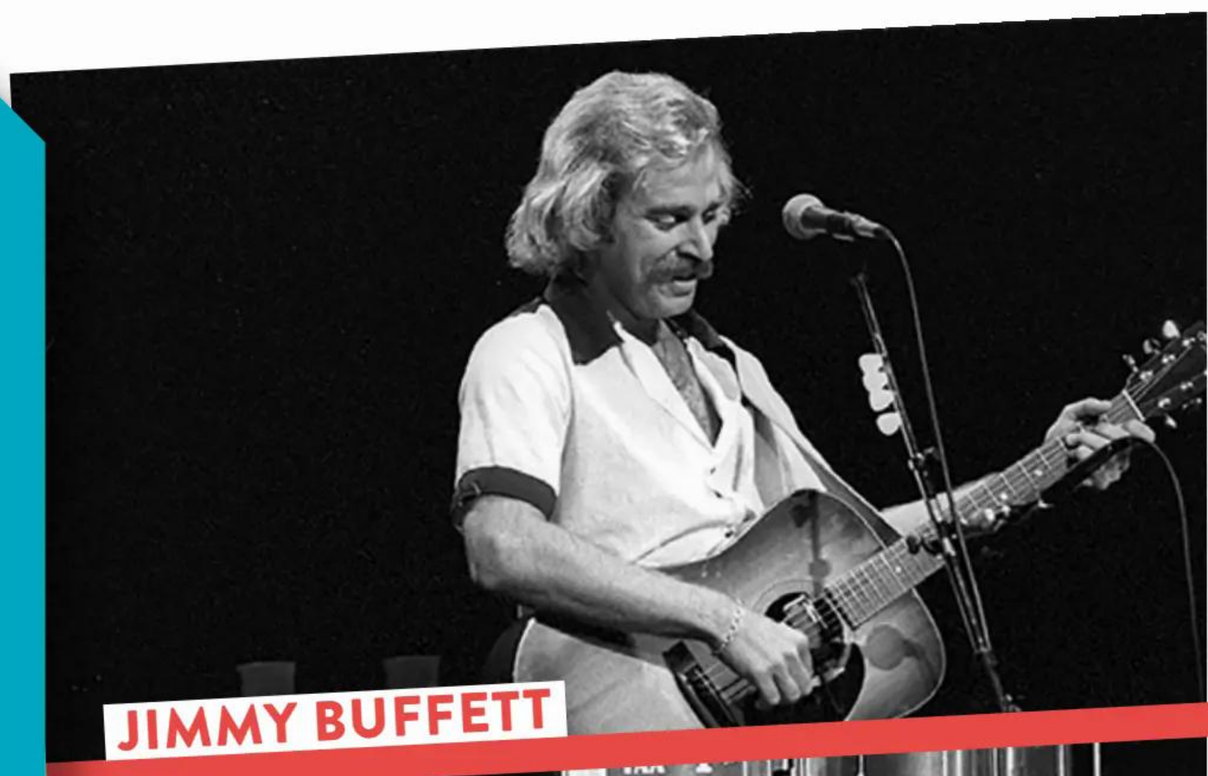
CLASS OF 2024

The **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** Foundation has announced the Class of 2024, with 16 acts set to receive the honour!

"Rock and Roll is an ever-evolving amalgam of sounds that impacts culture and moves generations," says John Sykes, Chairman of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation. "This diverse group of inductees each broke down musical barriers and influenced countless artists that followed in their footsteps."

The inductees were announced live on ABC by Ryan Seacrest and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Lionel Richie during the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Night episode of 'American Idol', where the Top 14 American Idol finalists took on songs from legendary Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductees as America voted live for the Top 12. **RP**

● ***The 2024 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction will be live on Saturday, October 19 at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland, Ohio. The 2024 ceremony will once again stream live on Disney+ with a special airing on ABC at a later date and available on Hulu the next day.***



JIMMY BUFFETT

A TRIBE CALLED QUEST

DIONNE WARWICK

BIG MAMA THORNTON

MC5

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

FOREIGNER

CHER

OZZY OSBOURNE

PETER FRAMPTON

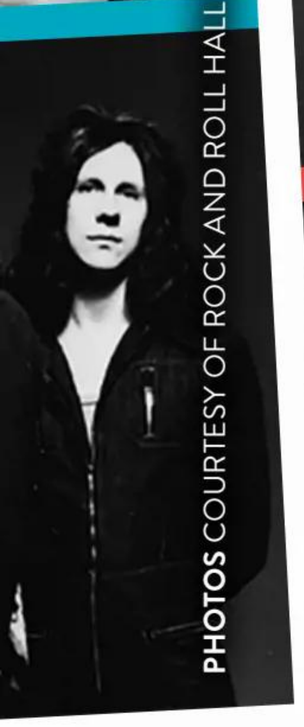
JOHN MAYALL

KOOL & THE GANG

NORMAN WHITFIELD

MARY J. BLIGE

ALEXIS KORNER



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME

PERFORMER CATEGORY

Mary J. Blige
Cher
Dave Matthews Band
Foreigner
Peter Frampton
Kool & The Gang
Ozzy Osbourne
A Tribe Called Quest

MUSICAL INFLUENCE AWARD

Alexis Korner
John Mayall
Big Mama Thornton

MUSICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Jimmy Buffett
MC5
Dionne Warwick
Norman Whitfield

AHMET ERTEGUN AWARD

Suzanne de Passe

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The art of letting go

Reviving her solo career after 20 years, while marking three decades in music, **Shaznay Lewis** shares her brilliant new album, 'Pages', looks back on her biggest successes and reveals the future of All Saints!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Over the past 30 years, pop stalwart Shaznay Lewis has cemented her position as one of British music's finest, but only now is she ready to take the reins and go it alone with her new solo album, 'Pages'.

She did it once before - in 2004, following All Saints' initial split, she signed with London Records for her first outing, 'Open', featuring the Top 10 single *Never Felt Like This Before* - but the place she finds herself in today is worlds away from that 20-something year old, riding the coattails of the group's biggest hits.

Sitting down in her management's cool East London offices to chat about the latest chapter in her career, there's a strikingly relaxed air about the singer-songwriter as she admits: "It feels crazy - I never saw this coming..."

MIRACLE

"I did a writing session with Moyses Dos Santos and Charlie Stacey where we were trying loads of different ideas and nothing was coming up," Shaznay reflects on the origins of the record. "Literally, towards the end of the session, I latched onto this hook that the guys were playing, ▶

I took it away and I sat on it for a while, then after about five months or so I wrote *Missiles*. Just from writing that I wanted to do a project."

Her choice of words is intentional; for much of the creative process, 'Pages' was a "project". "I was just really excited and I wasn't even thinking about the endgame," she insists. "I'd go into the sessions, like somebody who'd never been in a studio before. Just really excited. And I think [my collaborators] caught on to the excitement, so they were really enthusiastic to create with me - even though none of us knew where it was going to lead us."

Across 12 songs, Shaznay assembles a heavy-hitting cohort of writers and producers, including Ben Cullum, Michael Angelo, Johan Hugo and Jez Ashurst. It's a notably fresh line-up for Shaznay. "The only person I've worked with before was Ben, who wrote [All Saints song] *Three Four* with myself and K-Gee," she says. "So we're friends and we've worked together before, but everybody else was new."

It was, she admits, a "conscious" decision - "Obviously, my go-to is usually K-Gee," she laughs of their long-running collaboration, which started with All Saints' eponymous 1997 debut album and continued through 2018's 'Testament' - and even when she did consider a studio session together, the universe had other plans.

"We were having these conversations with the plan to actually go in with him but it wasn't happening, for some reason, because I was going in with other people first and we weren't quite getting around to doing anything together," Shaznay reflects. "I got to the point where I thought, 'It's not meant to happen. We're not meant to work together.'

"Usually, my go-to would be to get Mel [Blatt] to do BVs for me, or to feature on something, and that was initially in my head, but I got to a point where I felt like that wasn't meant to happen. If I was going to be doing this journey, I was meant to do it differently and completely on my own. I feel like it was the right decision."

It also proved integral in defining the crossover between Shaznay from All Saints and Shaznay Lewis, the solo artist. "In a lot of sessions, people can be under the impression that we have to sort of create another *Pure Shores* or another *Never Ever*, but I don't go into sessions like that. I literally just go in to create," she maintains. "Being a creative, whether it's a producer or a writer, it's always about not trying to match what you've done before, but just being able to just create something else, that makes you just as excited. Also, you're in a different place and at a different stage every time you go in to write stuff, so it's just all about creating where you're at, at that particular time."

> **If I was going to be doing this journey, I was meant to do it differently and completely on my own**

She may not have looked to past collaborators, but as she immersed herself deeper into the project Shaznay did tap into the music that influences and uplifts her the most. "I did a playlist of inspirational songs - different songs from different genres and different times - and they each had certain little things in them that I liked," she reveals. "I'm a big fan of '80s music, so I suppose the synthy stuff comes from that, and the producers also brought their own inspirations. But I knew I wanted it to sound lush. I knew I wanted there to be strings and for it to be quite dramatic."

PICK YOU UP

Drama is a thread that runs through 'Pages'; as the first song to be written, the epic *Missiles* is an apt opener, while *Supposed To Be* has echoes of Prince, *Bruises* is a slick slice of sophisticated adult pop and *Got To Let Go* - the most commercial offering on the record - proves Shaznay's knack for writing and delivering all-round bangers.

It shows an effort in switching things up from the singer-songwriter, who admits to having a penchant for mid-tempo tracks - case in point, the lead singles *Miracle* and *Kiss Of Life*. "I did both of those songs with Ant Whiting and Emily Phillips, and we spent quite a lot of time on those songs because we always knew that they were special," she smiles. "They just made sense to come out with first. Especially *Miracle*. That song holds a lot of meaning for me."

Follow-up track *Good Mourning* is a collaboration with BRIT and two-time MOBO winner Shola Ama and the pioneering UK ragga/jungle icon General Levy, while the album's second song, *Pick You Up*, features a spoken-word intro from Self Esteem. It was the idea of co-writer Johan Hugo, who was a late addition to the project. "*Pick You Up* and *Awake* were the last two songs on the album and when I wrote with Johan, we kind of thought we'd had it wrapped up, but I knew the minute I went in with him that the schedule was going to change," Shaznay grins.

"When I wrote *Pick You Up*, I knew that I wanted there to be some form of spoken word at the beginning ▶

> **I did this on my own label so it's a completely different setup; no A&R so no pressure**

and Johan was like, 'We need to get Rebecca on this'. So he reached out to her and it was great, because she was really busy but she was also really up for it. We sent her the song and we were waiting quite a while for her to get back with her part - and it was right at the 11th hour, she literally sent it through on a voice note - and it was perfect. We didn't even have to edit it. We didn't have to change anything or ask her to do it again. It was just perfect."

Throughout the process, collaboration was at the heart of 'Pages' and the lyric to *Peaches* was inspired by a chapter of history brought to light during the sessions. "After the end of the civil war in 1865, thousands of freed slaves travelled north from the Southern States, looking for work," explains Shaznay. "About 20,000 ended up in Natchez, Mississippi. The town was hostile to these people and the Union Soldiers didn't know what to do with them, so they built a camp in the Devils Punchbowl Valley to keep them in one place. They kept them behind walls, took many of the men for enforced labour, and abandoned women and children to their fate. Thousands starved to death and died on the ground where they stood. The valley is now famous for its peach trees. Nobody eats the peaches as it is well known that these trees have grown on the bones of the dead souls who perished there."

She adds: "Emily [Phillips] shared that story with me - to be honest, I hadn't heard it before - during one of our many chats and both of us felt compelled to write about it. I've done stuff like that before; on 'Testament', *I Would* is very political. It's written in a way that it can have various meanings, but the inspiration behind some of those songs does come from that sort of place, but it's just written in a more artistic form."

Another track, *Hearts In Danger*, harks back to before All Saints' most-recent reunion. "That's the oldest song I have on there," Shaznay smiles. "I wrote that years ago - I don't think my daughter was born, so more than 14 years ago - but I always knew I wanted to use it. So I kept it, stored it, then we changed the production and it felt right."

SUPPOSED TO BE

Not only does the new era mark Shaznay's first solo music in 20 years, but it's also the first time she's stepping out to perform a headline show in as many years; a nerve-wracking prospect, she admits, when it comes to such a vast record.

"This is where I did not think too much about where I'm at," she laughs, "because even though the songs are in keys that are great for the studio and great for the

"In a lot of sessions, people can be under the impression that we have to sort of create another *Pure Shores* or another *Never Ever*"

“You’re in a different place and at a different stage every time you go in to write stuff”

creative process, singing them live will be a different approach. It's great to be in the studio and to create and do exactly whatever you want - and I'm pleased that I didn't think about shows or anything like that, because that would have hindered the creative process - but when you're used to being in a band and layering as many harmonies as possible, it's not the same doing it live as a solo artist."

As if stepping back out independent of All Saints wasn't daunting enough, Shaznay's first solo performance was for the BBC Radio 2 Piano Room with the BBC Concert Orchestra, during which she performed *Kiss Of Life*, the group's classic hit *Pure Shores* and a cover of No Doubt's *Don't Speak*. "I'm not gonna lie, I had a few days where I was quite nervous, but on the actual day when I went into the rehearsal, I thought to myself, 'Oh my God, I'm here with an orchestra, I put strings on my record, this is a dream!' I was so lucky to be in that situation and I just really embraced it."

When it came to the cover, she had a selection to choose from. "There was a Massive Attack song I really wanted to do - there were quite a few - but No Doubt seemed to be the one that they were happy with me doing," Shaznay recalls. "It's funny, actually, because I had a little moment where I thought to myself, 'Oh God, is this going to be OK?', because when I was with the girls and we used to do covers, one of the girls had this rule that we should never do a cover by a female artist because there'll be too many comparisons to draw upon.

"I started to worry about it and then I thought: 'Well actually no, just do you.' I chose that song because Gwen's voice is quite unique and it's quirky. It's not conventional and I don't think my voice is conventional. There's also an ever so slight undertone of reggae in some of the things that she does and, being from the Caribbean, I can relate to that. I find that stuff easy. It's like when [All Saints] did a cover of *Message In A Bottle*. So yeah, I was really pleased with how it turned out."

Shaznay will celebrate the release of 'Pages' with a show at London's Jazz Cafe and will perform a run of live dates over the summer, including a stop at Mighty Hoopla in Brockwell Park. When it comes to the setlist, the focus will be the new album with classics from her debut and select cuts from All Saints' repertoire thrown in.

When I did the first solo album, I was coming off the back of all the huge, crazy stuff and there was pressure to produce something that would match All Saints

As a creative, there's a part of me that thinks I've moved on from that girl 20 years ago

"As a creative, there's a part of me that thinks I've moved on from that girl 20 years ago," she admits. "The creative I am today is so far removed from that, *but* I love those songs like everybody else does and I look forward to being able to sing those songs with people that haven't heard me sing them live."

It's an attitude that comes with finally feeling comfortable and relaxed with the position that she's in, three decades into her career. "When I did the first solo album, I was coming off the back of all the huge, crazy stuff and with that came the pressure and the expectation of producing something that would match where All Saints was," she sighs. "Whereas now, I feel like that's eased off a hell of a lot. I did this on my own label so it's a completely different setup; no A&R so no pressure. No one telling me what to do. It just made it a completely different, more chilled and more relaxed experience.

Throughout our interview, Shaznay talks about All Saints in the past tense. There are no plans for new music from the group, although there are outtakes in the vault that may be released in the future. "When we did 'Red Flag' and 'Testament', we set up our own label so there weren't many songs that didn't get used," she says, "but on those first two albums where we were tied to a label, they were making us constantly write, write, write..."

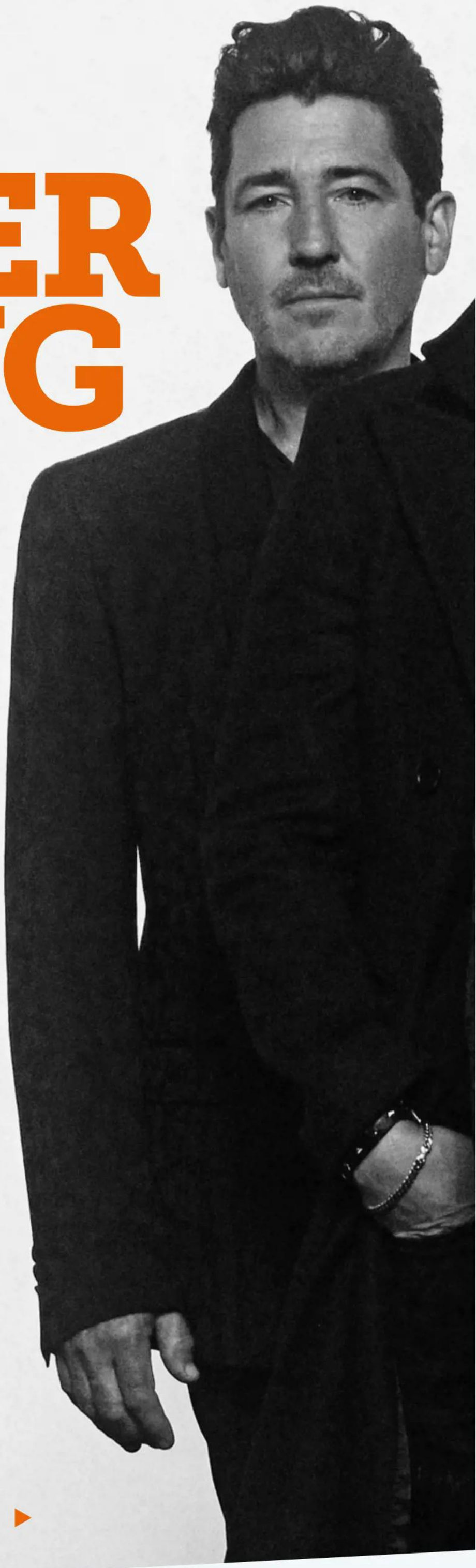
Her label now, 1.9.7.5 Recordings, is a nod to All Saints 1.9.7.5 - the band's original name, when Shaznay and Mel released *Silver Shadow* with the late Simone Rainford in 1994, and follow-up *If You Wanna Party (I Found Lovin')* as a duo a year later. Three decades on, and following Simone's untimely passing in 2013, she's unsure about revisiting the group's earliest works on their 30th anniversary, but in a twist of fate there's a nod back to her beginnings within her team today.

"One of the guys I worked with at ZZT is now with [distribution service] Absolute and is doing this project with me," she reveals. "It's insane! We had a meeting here together - our first meeting - and I just kept looking over and laughing, thinking: 'I can't believe I'm sat here with you - this is mad!' Talk about things coming back around..." **RP**

● ***'Pages' is out May 17 on 1.9.7.5 Recordings. Shaznay plays London's Jazz Cafe on May 14. Tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTOS OSCAR J RYAN

HERE'S TO NEVER GROWING UP



Back on the block with a brand new album, NKOTB's **Jordan Knight** and **Danny Wood** tell all about their latest offering, 'Still Kids', and say that 40 years after they formed, they're still kids deep down!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

The late 1980s saw Massachusetts-based five-piece New Kids On The Block take on the world and blaze the trail for boy bands such as Take That, Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC, becoming global sensations and shifting more than 80 million records.

As pre- and early-teens, their eponymous debut album arrived in 1986 and went largely under the radar, but fast-forward three years and their second LP, 'Hangin' Tough' (1989), marked a commercial breakthrough, peaking at No. 1 in the US and No. 2 in the UK, where it spawned the chart-topping singles *You Got It (The Right Stuff)* and the title song.

Hit records followed into the '90s - including the UK No. 1 LP 'Step By Step' (1990) - and this month the boys return with 'Still Kids'; their first studio album in over a decade and a declaration that they're still every inch the coolest kids on the block.

LONG TIME COMING

"The awesome thing about music and style and fashion and all that stuff, is that it comes back around," says Jordan Knight as we discuss the group's new album, the aptly-titled 'Still Kids'. Featuring 14 new songs from himself, Jonathan Knight, Joey McIntyre, Donnie Wahlberg and Danny Wood, the record is packed with pop anthems, dance tracks and love songs that channel NKOTB's beginnings while paving the way for the next era in the group's trajectory.

Now in their early-mid 50s, it's been 40 years since the band formed in

> THE AWESOME THING ABOUT MUSIC AND STYLE AND FASHION AND ALL THAT STUFF, IS THAT IT COMES BACK AROUND
>
> **JORDAN**

New Kids On The Block (l-r): Jonathan Knight, Donnie Wahlberg, Jordan Knight, Joey McIntyre, Danny Wood

1984 and almost as long since they first released music, but inside they still feel like the same teens that took on the world in the late 1980s. "It sounds like an '80s record - like something we listened to when we were kids - but the cool thing about it is that sound is in style now," Jordan adds of the LP, which includes the synth-driven lead single, *Kids*. "And the title is perfect for us, because that's what we do every night on stage. We act like kids, basically. And we want everybody else to relive those feelings of when they were young."

For Danny, getting into the NKOTB headspace comes with reconnecting with the hordes of screaming fans that pack out their gigs night after night. "There's not much to think about when you play in these places," he laughs. It's not hard to see why; this summer, they'll hit the road across the US with their 'Magic Summer' tour with special guests Paula Abdul and DJ Jazzy Jeff.

It's a reimagining of their 1990 tour of the same name - Danny's "least favourite", no less - and an opportunity to bring back the magic in a different set-up. "We were playing stadiums and were so far away from the crowd - there was a disconnect," he recalls. "So I'm excited to do it right this time; there'll be some things that were nostalgic from that tour, and also a whole bunch of new stuff, and the magic will be all about our performance and entertaining the crowd."

Does that mean the return of some of the group's looks from back in the day too? Jordan laughs: "From that tour? Like on the song *Kids*, it sounds up to date but has an '80s feel - we'll throwback that way. But the stuff we used to wear..."

"The problem with the '80s fashion is that it came back for women and they look great in it - the neon colours and side ponytails," Danny interjects. "But for guys, man - it's not so great! Maybe you'll see some jean outfits and we'll lean into it *slightly*." "But no shoulder pads," Jordan laughs.

OLD SCHOOL

When it comes to 'Still Kids', seven of the album tracks were co-written by Donnie - who is credited as creative director on the LP - with longtime collaborator Lars Halvor Jensen and his production company, DEEKAY Music. Joey worked on another six with songwriter and producer Sean Thomas.

When it comes to their favourites from the set, Jordan cites one of the tracks Jonathan sings, called *Better Days*, as a personal favourite. "My brother has a show on HGTV called 'Farmhouse Fixer' and [the song] has a real country vibe to it. It's just a sweet,

> I WOULD *NEVER* HAVE THOUGHT I'D BE PERFORMING *THE RIGHT STUFF* WHEN I'M 55
>
> **DANNY**

sweet song. And he doesn't really sing much on the record, so it was kind of cool to hear him sing the whole song."

For Danny, it's the "party, line dancing" track *Get Down*. "DJ Jazzy Jeff scratches on it and stuff, so I really can't wait till we put that out and maybe do a little video so that the fans can join in with the choreography," he smiles, hinting towards a future TikTok moment. "You know, people have been doing that since the pandemic - mums and their daughters doing dances and stuff. It's fun to see people doing it and enjoying the records!"

It was during that time the group enjoyed their own TikTok renaissance, thanks to actor Kevin Bacon, who performed *Hangin' Tough* acoustically while surrounded by goats at his Connecticut farm. "It's always cool to see people that you never would suspect doing something like that," Jordan grins.

It happens increasingly more often, he adds, thanks to platforms like Spotify and YouTube, which have "made it easier for younger folks to find older groups and really get into them". "We definitely see multi generations in the crowd; a lot of people that grew up listening to us were playing our music while *their* kids were growing up, so the kids kind of gravitated towards us too," he muses. "It's really cool. We see it in our meet and greets a lot of times too; there'll be fans with their husbands, their daughters and sons, their grandparents... It's multigenerational, for sure."

Their fanbase may span generations, but when it comes to the influences they lean into creatively NKOTB don't shun the decades that made them. Case in point: *Bring Back The Time*, the band's 2022 collaborative single with Salt-N-Pepa, Rick Astley and En Vogue, which coincided with their 'MixTape' arena tour. A music video for the track salutes the era's iconic music videos, including Journey's *Separate Ways*, Twisted Sister's *We're Not Gonna Take It*, A Flock of Seagulls' *I Ran*, Michael Jackson's *Beat It*, Devo's *Whip It*, Duran Duran's *Rio*, Billy Idol's *Flesh For Fantasy*, Madonna's *Vogue*, Robert Palmer's *Addicted To Love* and Toni Basil's *Mickey*.

"We lean into whatever works for us but there's no doubt about it, all our big hits come from the '80s and '90s. So it's like, you can't avoid it" Danny explains. "But for that video, Donnie wrote up a great treatment and it was just so much fun impersonating the other '80s bands with those guys, who were all game to do it. It represented that tour and with this record, we want people to get a sneak peek to what we're going to do on the 'Magic Summer' tour."

COME BACK

Rewind 35 years to the start of the group's golden period and NKOTB's success was stratospheric: they released five albums - four of which went ▶

Platinum globally - scored 12 UK Top 20 hit singles, won two American Music Awards, and performed the Super Bowl XXV Halftime Show.

Since reuniting, their albums 'The Block' (2008) and '10' (2013) both went Top 10 in the US but, reflecting on the standout moments of their career to date, Danny insists it's all about the music. "To still be playing those songs..." he reflects. "I go back to when I was like 23 or 24 years old, I would *never* have thought I'd be performing *The Right Stuff* when I'm 55. So I just appreciate the fact that we have had the career we had back then, because those songs have lasted going on 40 years. I'm very thankful that we have all this music, we have a great catalogue, and we can keep making new music to add to it."

Jordan adds: "It's really crazy when you think about it like that! We've been doing these big tours and still putting out music since we were 15 or 16 years old. We were in the studio, trying to figure it all out, and we're still here. It is really amazing. It's really humbling when you look back on it."

Created by Maurice Starr, who produced the group's early run of albums, they signed with Columbia Records and at the time of their debut, the group's oldest members were barely 16 years old, while Joey was only 12. "A lot of people perceive young kids as not having any voice and being told what to do," Jordan reflects, "but we were really independent kids and we had our own ideas. We put a lot of things together ourselves - we didn't have stylists or choreographers or anything like that."

It was, he suggests, their input that helped 'Hangin' Tough' become a hit after their first LP failed to take off. "We started getting more involved in giving ideas for the music and our producer, Maurice, he let us really flourish and he listened to us and he took cues from us. It was like, 'Let me do what these kids are in touch with', so he really tapped into our energy and it was when we started working together a lot more that we came up with the 'Hangin' Tough' album."

Topping the charts and touring the

> **SOME OF MY GREATEST MEMORIES ARE GOING OVER TO THE UK AND EUROPE, BECAUSE IT FELT FREER**
>
> **JORDAN**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

world was a dream come true, but with fans around every corner Danny says the success was hard to escape - even at home. "In the late-'80s and early-'90s, I stayed living in Boston in the house I grew up in for a while, so there were always people outside and my parents would invite them in," he laughs. "My mum would give them cookies, then I'd come home from the gym and there'd be 10 girls in the kitchen, talking with my mum. It became a little bit normal, kind of..."

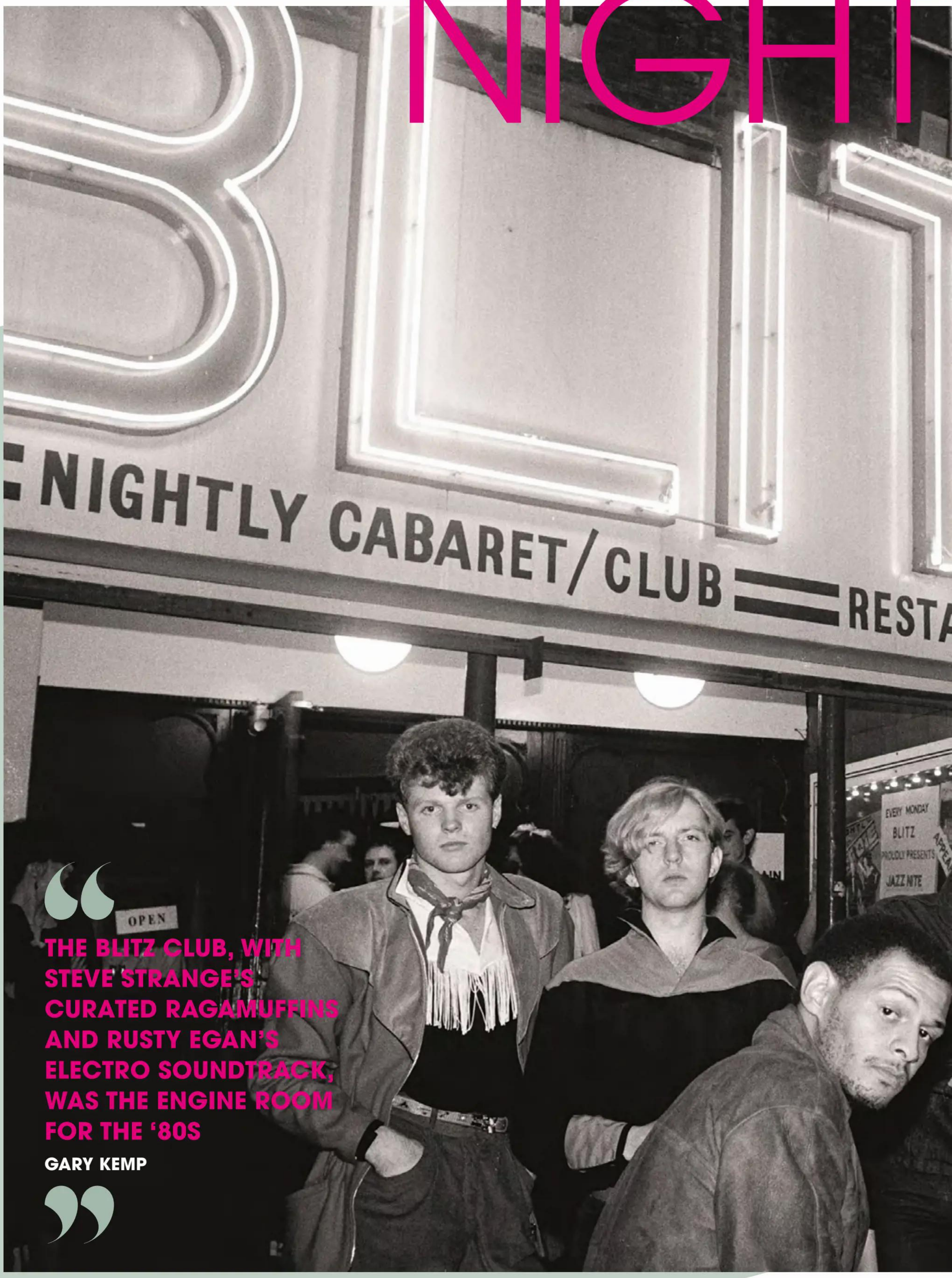
Nowadays, fans are more likely to tune into social media to keep up with the boys, but their success continues with NKOTB landing a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame back in 2014. The US tour is booked and good to go, but will they be heading over to Europe anytime soon? Danny says it should be happening "in the near future" with talk of shows in Asia and Australia too. "We were planning to go and then Covid happened," he sighs. "So, hopefully in the next couple of years we'll do a world tour."

"Some of my greatest memories are going over to the UK and Europe, because it felt freer," Jordan adds. "We could really be ourselves and it seemed like all the shows that we were on were open to us, so it would be cool to go back."

All of them? His eyes light up: "Piers freakin' Morgan - that guy was our arch enemy!" But Danny grins: "He can't say nothing about us no more, man, because we're still here. Anyone back then that was saying anything - I mean, we're still doing it. So, if you're gonna say anything negative about us now it's like, 'OK...' After more than 35 years, I think we're doing something right!" **RP**

● ***'Still Kids' is out May 17 on BMG.***

NIGHT



“THE BLITZ CLUB, WITH STEVE STRANGE’S CURATED RAGAMUFFINS AND RUSTY EGAN’S ELECTRO SOUNDTRACK, WAS THE ENGINE ROOM FOR THE ‘80S”

GARY KEMP

CLUBBING

Celebrating 45 years of the iconic Blitz club with an epic new box set, **Rusty Egan** and co. look back on the early evolution of the '80s!

"The ethos was that everybody in that club could be heroes, just for one day and my DJ set lists at the Blitz were designed to make YOU the star - on the dancefloor, at the bar or just standing there in your finest on a dreary Tuesday night," remarks Rusty Egan of the innovative music he has compiled for his new box set.

The four-disc set is a 66-track affair, featuring more than five hours of classics that soundtracked the groundbreaking London club that originated the New Romantic movement over an 18-month run in 1979–1980.

"You could be whoever you wanted to be - your life was going to be great and the '80s were here. The late '70s had been so grey and drab and I wanted the music I played each week to instantly transport you somewhere else – maybe to Europe with a few film noir references or to Japan via some exciting new electronic sounds. Of course there were lots of robotic vocals sung in German, Russian, French and English too."

Visage outside The Blitz Club in 1980 (l-r): Rusty Egan, John McGeoch, Barry Adamson, Billy Currie, Dave Formula, Steve Strange and Midge Ure

POP MUZIC

As Egan says, Britain was a bleak place to be in the late-'70s, only just starting to emerge from the grip of the three-day working week and the regular power cuts that had plagued the nation for years, as well as the most significant strikes since the general strike of 1926 as gravediggers, hospital cleaners, truck drivers, school cafeteria workers, pilots, train drivers, printers and binmen (to name but a few) took industrial action over the winter of 1978-1979. The mass disruption and freezing conditions of those grim months earned this period the title of the 'Winter of Discontent' and a powerful place in collective memory.

It was against this backdrop that Rusty Egan and Steve Strange decided to start their own weekly central London club night at Billy's in 1978, heartily sick of the regular violence they encountered on evenings out in the capital's venues at that time. Their new club night was an instant success but the Soho bar's owner greedily decided to double his prices, so the duo moved it after just a few weeks to a dusty World War II themed Covent Garden wine bar called the Blitz, opening there in February 1979 amidst its candlesticks, gingham tablecloths, Winston Churchill portraits and metal wartime posters.

With Strange taking control of the door/front of house whilst Egan handled DJ duties, the Blitz Club soon established itself as the place to be (and the place to be seen) on a Tuesday night in London. Attracting a crowd of like-minded, artistically rich but (mostly) financially poor individuals, the club took on a 'collective' feel, where squat-dwelling former punks as well as art and fashion students from nearby Saint Martins could mix without fear, helping each other out in whatever way they could with their latest projects and ideas, all set to the soundtrack of Egan's rapidly expanding record box. As Spandau Ballet manager and Blitz Club regular Steve Dagger remarked: "They had to make it work – there was no Plan B or even any thought of failure."

Rusty Egan DJing at The Blitz Club in 1979

> **THEY HAD TO MAKE IT WORK – THERE WAS NO PLAN B OR EVEN ANY THOUGHT OF FAILURE**
>
> **STEVE DAGGER**

The 'Blitz Kids' (as the tabloids named them) were "kids who'd grown out of the twentieth century" according to author and cultural commentator Peter York and their number included soon-to-be major British designers like Katharine Hamnett, Melissa Caplan, John Galliano, Stephen Linard and Stephen Jones, who would mix with young artistic talent such as Grayson Perry, John Maybury and a then 15-year-old Tracy Emin, amongst others. Many of the aspiring musicians soon to become British pop's most innovative early-'80s exports would be there on a regular basis, including the Blitz Club's cloakroom manager Boy George, Sade, Spandau Ballet, Billy Idol, Ultravox, Visage, Adam And The Ants, Bananarama, Marilyn, Gary Numan, Siouxsie and Sigue Sigue Sputnik.

All were soaking up the sounds Egan was seeking out during his regular record buying trips to the Continent - a propulsive, mostly electronic sonic palette which he would serve up on a weekly basis with the aim of exciting and inspiring this new generation of extravagantly-dressed young artists, designers, fashionistas, club impresarios, actors, broadcasters, journalists, writers, music moguls, DJs and future pop royalty, all busily plotting worldwide domination within the club's Covent Garden confines every Tuesday night.

PASSING STRANGERS

The Blitz Club's glamorous reputation spread rapidly and the venue became

WORDS SUPPLIED **PHOTOS** PETER ASHWORTH / SHEILA ROCK

steadily more packed each week. Strange was forced to introduce a tougher door policy, not through any particular sense of elitism (although any eager hopefuls were expected to have made at least a decent effort to appear fashionable and impress him) but to adhere to the capital's strict fire safety restrictions on numbers whilst keeping any potential troublemakers out of the club's safe space.

The new door policy meant he famously refused Mick Jagger entry to the Blitz Club one night (although disputed, it was claimed this was due to Strange's annoyance at the Rolling Stones frontman trying to get in whilst wearing jeans and a baseball cap). David Bowie and his entourage were snuck around the rear of the building in May 1980 though, despite the club being completely full to capacity that night. Always artistically and socially curious, Bowie was there to keep a close eye on what was happening as well as to recruit extras (including Strange himself) for his and David Mallet's *Ashes To Ashes* promo clip - at that time the most expensive music video ever made.

> **YOU COULD BE WHOEVER YOU WANTED TO BE - YOUR LIFE WAS GOING TO BE GREAT AND THE '80S WERE HERE**
>
> **RUSTY EGAN**

Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp, whose band were advised by Rusty to go straight out and buy a synthesiser in 1979 and would play their first ever public gig at the Blitz Club's Christmas party later that year, remembers: "The Blitz Club, with Steve Strange's curated ragamuffins and Rusty Egan's electro soundtrack, was the engine room for the '80s. Spandau Ballet was forged from that heat. We were determined to make our own advances into the new culture we wanted to lead. Vinyl was just one of our mediums. Here are the tunes we danced to, planned over, posed and gazed to. Energy poured out of this backing track."

Although the late-'70s had seen a steady line of new, affordable synthesisers, which led to a number of key independent proto-electronic single releases (some literally recorded in bedrooms) by young British mavericks like The Normal, Thomas Leer & Robert Rental and Vice Versa, and despite his own regular overseas record buying trips, Egan soon realised he still didn't have enough electronic music to play in his DJ sets at the Blitz. He decided his best course of action might simply be to make his own future-facing music in conjunction with his like-minded former Rich Kids bandmate Midge Ure. The duo recorded a number of more electronic-focussed demos in the basement of EMI's Manchester Square Studios in 1979, but the major label wasn't keen on what they heard.

Enlisting Billy Currie (of Ultravox Mk.1 and Tubeway Army renown), Magazine's John McGeoch, Dave Formula and Barry Adamson and, after initially considering teenage French model and singer Ronny (who Ure and Egan had also been demoing with their spare studio time at EMI), Egan suggested his Blitz Club co-owner and friend Steve Strange might actually be 'the face' they had been searching for to front their new British synth supergroup, Visage.

FADE TO GREY

Egan and Strange moved on from the Blitz after little more than 18 months and opened their Club For Heroes at the more upmarket Barracuda Club on Baker Street in June 1981. This new venture quickly became a new mecca for a voracious London paparazzi, keen to photograph and cash-in on the club's glamorous visiting international stars such as Michael Jackson, Grace Jones, Debbie Harry, Bryan Ferry, Kid Creole, Kraftwerk, Talking Heads, Yellow Magic Orchestra and Mick Jagger (presumably more suitably attired this time).

Aside from groundbreaking work via his own band Visage (and his early punk days playing with both The Clash and Rich Kids), Egan has occupied the drum stool across a number of other projects in his near 50-year career, including Skids, Phil Lynott, Ronny, Midge Ure, Shock, The Senate and more; he signed a young Soft Cell to their first deal with his own publishing company (Metropolis Music); he booked and flew Madonna to play her first ever UK public live show at Camden Palace (his and Strange's final club venture), also giving Fat Tony his first DJ job; he booked Run D.M.C. to play one of their first UK shows at his London Lyceum club night Playground in spring 1985. Additionally, he has mixed and remixed a whole plethora of acts including Madonna (Egan provided 12" remixes for her 1982 debut single *Everybody*), U2, Moby, La Roux, Mylene Farmer, Afrika Bambaataa, Nona Hendryx, B-Movie, Spear Of Destiny, Space and Anne Clark.

Still working as a gigging DJ on a weekly basis whilst putting the finishing touches to his much-awaited second album of electronic music collaborations (due late-2024 and titled 'Romantic'), Egan is planning a return to live music as well as an immersive theatrical experience based on the Blitz Club.

Ever the colourful storyteller, he also plans to finally release his long-awaited autobiography: "I wrote 350 pages of it during lockdown, but then the lawyers got hold of the manuscript and told me I just couldn't include a lot of it for legal reasons, so it's down to 50 fucking pages again now. **RP**

● ***'Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!' is out June 28 on Demon.***

“I’VE HAD A STRANGE STORY - IT SHOULD REALLY BE CAPTURED AS AN HBO SERIES”

DANCE YOUR PAIN AWAY

A decade of dizzying highs and devastating lows behind her, chart-topping Canadian pop star **Kiesza** is back with a brand new attitude and a brilliant new record!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Kiesza's rise from obscurity to global superstar with her 2014 debut single, *Hideaway*, was the stuff of pop legend, but in the decade since her breakthrough things have been far from plain sailing for the Canadian star.

As her career blew up, her best friend received a devastating cancer diagnosis that pushed the singer to the edge, before a car accident resulted in a traumatic brain injury and a six-year recovery process that left her fearing for her life and career.

Having faced adversity head-on, she's back with her third album, 'Dancing And Crying: Vol 1', and a project that finally sees Kiesza reconnect with her love of music, dismissing industry trends and crafting her own brand of pop that speaks to the artist as she stands today.

STRANGERS

"The industry is so driven by playlists now and I had a lot of people be like, 'What playlists are these gonna go on?'," laughs Kiesza of her new record, which arrives this month..

Treading the line between cutting-edge current dance, house, and electro-pop, and the folk styles that have informed her songwriting since long before she emerged a decade ago, the project is a sonic amalgamation of the music that's continued to influence her creative journey.

The singles - *Heaven Ain't Calling*, *Dancing And Crying* and *I Go Dance* - have all been in a vein similar to what she's best known for. "But the last three songs on the record are very much a fusion of folk, Americana and house," she says. "It's funny, there's always this little bit of fear-based mentality in every industry and the current one with the music industry is: 'What playlists will it go on?' So it's like, 'Well, if it doesn't fit a specific playlists that's fine. Let's make a new one!'"

It's a bugbear for Kiesza not only as an artist, but as a songwriter first and foremost who fell into being a pop star by accident. "I've had a strange story - it should really be captured as an HBO series," she chuckles. "I was a songwriter and I was writing different kinds of songs for different people, but when I wrote *Hideaway* I realised that I wanted to put it out for myself because it didn't sound like it could have another voice on it. It really felt like me. I had never done a house track before, but I just knew in my gut it was meant to be mine."

At the time, the record label wanted to submit the track to Mariah Carey - "And I was super happy as a songwriter; I love being behind the scenes, in the studio writing songs," she maintains - but in the end Kiesza went with her gut and released the track as an artist. "And as we all know, it blew up really fast," she reflects.

"My plan was to put out the song, make a video and then move to the UK, thinking I could work the song in the clubs, but Annie Mac got hold of it in January and it started going viral instantly. This is just at the cusp of streaming - if it had happened even a year later it would have been out of control - but by April, I was playing Wembley Stadium!"

On the back of the overnight success, she had a matter of weeks to write her major label debut, 'Sound Of A Woman' (2014), which proved to be a hit worldwide, going Top 40 on the UK Albums Chart and entering the Billboard 200, and led to her starting work on a second album. But just as her career was taking off, Kiesza's best friend was diagnosed with terminal cancer and passed away in August 2015. "The second that my stuff started going big and all my dreams started manifesting, she got the diagnosis, so throughout that whole experience I basically had to watch my best friend die," she sighs. "And it was the weirdest duality, because I couldn't fully experience my own success. I felt guilty for it throughout the whole process, because I didn't want to talk about it with her - even though she was excited for me - and watching that deterioration was the hardest thing in the world."

ANNIE MAC GOT HOLD OF HIDEAWAY IN THE JANUARY AND IT STARTED GOING VIRAL INSTANTLY - BY APRIL, I WAS PLAYING WEMBLEY STADIUM

THE SECOND THAT MY STUFF STARTED GOING BIG AND ALL MY DREAMS STARTED MANIFESTING, MY BEST FRIEND GOT DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER AND I BASICALLY HAD TO WATCH HER DIE

HEAVEN AIN'T CALLING

After taking time to process her grief, Kiesza returned to the studio to work on new material, penning tracks like *Phantom Of The Dance Floor* and *Sensuum Defectui* with Stuart Price, but her world was once again turned upside down by a 2017 car accident in Toronto, Canada that left her with a severe head injury that unfolded over time.

Initially able to step away from the wreck, after five days of worsening symptoms such as ringing in her ears and balance issues, she went to hospital and was diagnosed with concussion. But weeks later, she collapsed after performing a show in Denmark and her condition progressed, leaving Kiesza housebound and bedbound, struggling with nausea, dizziness and balance issues, along with the knock-on effect on her mental health, that left her questioning whether she'd be able to perform again.

"I had a six-year recovery, because I deteriorated - I got worse for a year and a half, and then I started getting better," she recalls. "I put out [second album] 'Crave' in the process of my recovery. I went through my whole repertoire, because I write a lot of songs, and I found I had a lot of '80s-sounding songs that I'd written over time. So I went with that sound knowing it would be easy for me and in a matter of months the album was finished."

That was 2020 - the year the world shut down and, for Kiesza, it meant the album went largely under the radar as she continued to recover. For those who it did reach, 'Crave' was at least a "positive expression" in an otherwise dark time, but when it came to planning her follow-up LP, the musician took stock of everything that had been before and considered her motive for continuing to create.

"I really sat and thought: 'Do I want to do this?'," she reflects, "because as a musician, you just want to write another song, and another song, and another song...

But when you put out your music, you have to live with it and you have to continue to promote it. I’m always ready to move on and my team is like: ‘You gotta stay with your songs!’

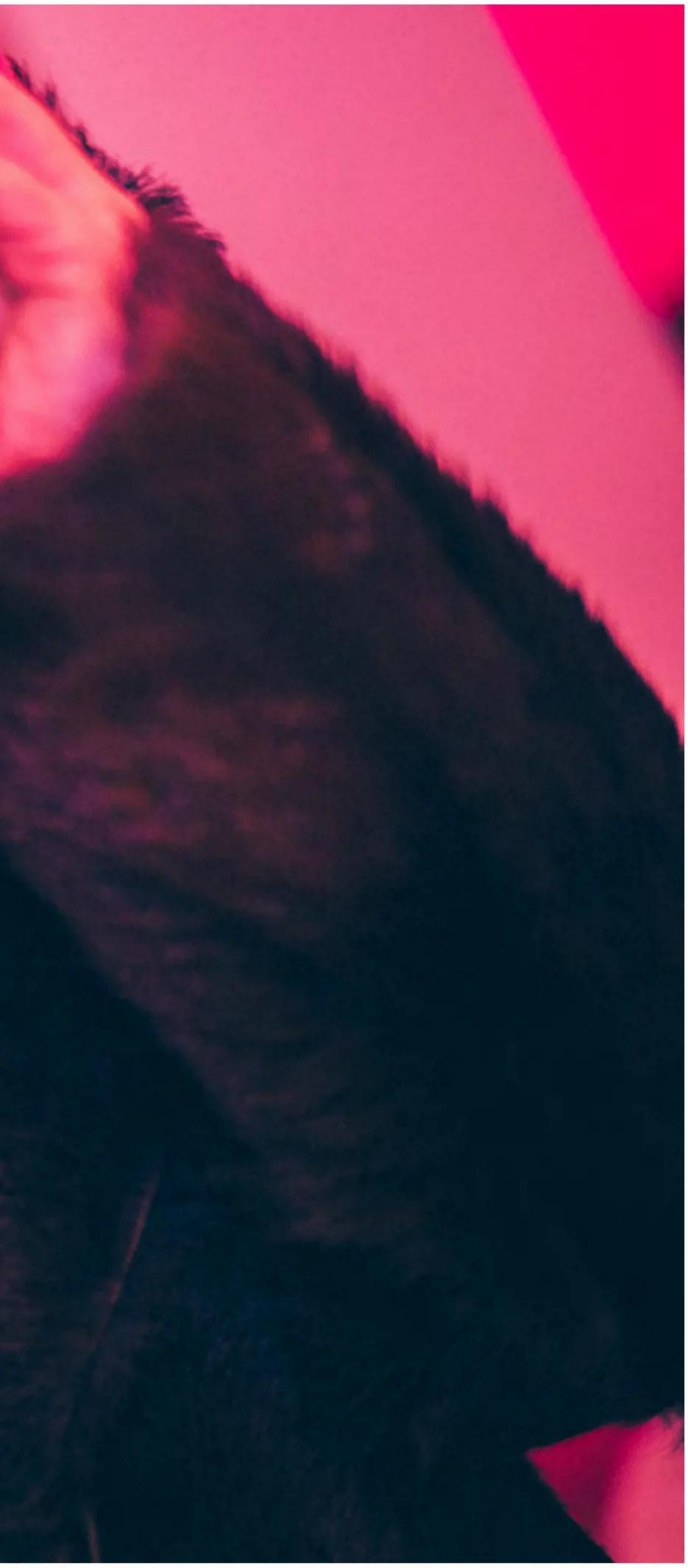
“I thought, ‘What is going to make me addicted to music beyond putting the music out?’, and I love stories, so there’s a narrative that goes with the album that was written to help me become addicted to this project.”

GO DANCE

Instead of merely putting out an album, the ‘Dancing And Crying’ series is a multi-format experience, with the record accompanied by a series of narrative-led visuals that are connected by radio theatre plays, voiced by Kiesza and her co-stars.

“I am an artist beyond music; I paint, I do digital art, all kinds of things. Give me any creative medium and I will go crazy with it,” she laughs. “Ultimately, I’ve always wanted to do a movie, so I was like, ‘I’m just gonna start the movie and write it in front of my audience as I go’. And I don’t even know where the story’s going next until I make the next music video!”

Shot in black and white, the visuals feature recurring characters played by Kiesza’s friends, with the whole series - created on a shoestring, indie budget -



PHOTOS MICK MARSEILLES

happening by accident. "I was moving to Norway for five months and I was waiting for my visa, but after Covid everything slowed down in the world and the Norwegian Embassy was just taking their sweet time," she remembers. "I was supposed to be crashing with my friend in Canada for a week and it was going on a month, so I just saw that he had a camera and I was like, 'Let's do a photoshoot!'"

It soon became a full-blown production. "I was like, 'Why don't we ask my friend - who has an entire vintage collection - to come by?' And then my friend was like, 'My brother's the DP [director of photography] of 'Umbrella Academy', I'll just invite him.' And then it's like, 'Well, the skeleton builder at the museum is available and he has a *great* jawline. Why don't we get him in there too?'

"THE FACT IS, I WAS CHOOSING TO PUT MY TIME INTO PEOPLE THAT WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN CARED IF I DIED"

"So everyone showed up, all dressed up, and we were just dancing - it was not intended to be a music video," Kiesza laughs. "Now we're onto the sixth video and it's interesting, the things that have manifested, potentially, for it, and the options we have are pretty wild!"

That's true of her plans for releasing new music, too. Vol 1 of 'Dancing And Crying' is six songs, with Keisa planning four releases in the series. "I have a lot of songs planned for the four volumes - I just haven't filled them all in," she smiles. "Some are gonna sound a little different than this, but they're all going to be a part of the same world. And 'Dancing And Crying' is something that can keep going, so if I want to add volume five, volume six - it's something that I can take with me through my life, basically, and just continue the story..."

With that comes a newfound perspective and appreciation for the things that matter in life, as Kiesza reemerges after facing up to her mortality. "I didn't realise how attached I was to my own identity," she sighs. "I was clinging to myself and trying to be that person that was so physically fit and full of energy, but I had to become selfish and take care of myself. I went through this whole intense process of self-acceptance, which I don't think I ever would have had the opportunity to do had this not happened, and I really sat with myself and thought about the fact that when I got in the car crash, people that I thought were my friends didn't even pick up the phone. All these celebrities and people I was hanging out with, they didn't care.

"I have no hard feelings, but the fact is that I was choosing to put my time into people that wouldn't have even cared if I died and it was the people that truly loved me that were there for me. When I realised that, I decided that I want to be surrounded by people that will be there and will come to help me when I need it, and I will be there for them. So that's the world that I have now and that's really what I've curated in my life. People that I really trust and love - and that give it back in return. That is the driving energy and the force behind all of the art that's coming out. It truly is centred on love and passion and friendship and fun!" **RP**

● ***'Dancing And Crying: Vol 1' is out May 24 on ECLYPCE.***

Mark Morriss

Supersonic

Hitting the road next month with a run of orchestral shows, icons of the **Britpop** era look back on the '90s and a golden patch in British music!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

In the tapestry of British music history, few movements have left as indelible a mark as Britpop.

Emerging in the early 1990s as a bold and unapologetically British response to the dominance of grunge from across the Atlantic, Britpop was more than just a genre; it was a cultural phenomenon that celebrated all things quintessentially British, from catchy melodies to guitar-driven anthems, from fashion to attitude.

At the forefront of this musical renaissance were The Bluetones, Ocean Colour Scene and Republica, from which Mark Morriss, Simon Fowler and Saffron sit down together to reflect on an iconic time in British music.

They're set to hit the road in June for a trio of Britpop Classical shows with Cast and The La's star John Power and Levellers' Mark Chadwick - an opportunity that they were keen to take.

SAFFRON: I've been quite lucky that I've actually done a couple before. I did the Cool Britannia Festival, which was myself, Peter Hooton from The Farm, Phil Daniels doing [Blur hit] *Parklife* and Glenn Gregory doing [Pulp classic] *Common People*, which was a bit bizarre. I think Jarvis [Cocker] might have been busy that day! I also did Back To Basics Symphonic with Opera North in Millennium Square, Leeds, which was magical and quite an overwhelming experience.

> ***With Britpop, I don't think it has anything to do with patriotism - I think it's about relatability, because this music was made here in Britain, about our lives here in Britain***
>
> **MARK**

SIMON: Well, my band went out with a string quartet called the Q Strings, which is about the nearest we got to it, I think...

It was in Birmingham that Ocean Colour Scene was born from the ashes of The Boys in 1989 and forged a sound that paid homage to their mod roots while adding a contemporary twist. Comprising Simon on vocals, along with Steve Cradock on guitar, Damon Minchella on bass, and Oscar Harrison on drums, they simmered with a run of singles - including the UK Top 50 *Yesterday Today* - in the early 1990s and even toured with Paul Weller, before their second album, 'Moseley Shoals' (1996), took the band to the top of the UK charts and delivered the Top 10 hits *You've Got It Bad*, *The Day We Caught The Train* and *The Circle*.

That same year, Republica - who emerged in 1994 with a sound that fused rock, electronica and dance, burst onto the scene with their self-titled debut album, featuring hits like *Ready To Go* and *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, making the band

PHOTO BEN MEADOWS

a global sensation and catapulting Republica to international fame.

SIMON: Saffron, I don't think we've ever met, have we?

SAFFRON: Yeah! We played in Chicago together and Oscar came on our bus, I've just remembered...

SIMON: Oh, I remember playing Chicago. I'd actually just been in hospital - I'd been staying up too late and I went to what they call a 'public hospital' and it was actually more like Bedlam!

SAFFRON: Oh no! I ended up in a hospital in Birmingham, Alabama with a broken bone and it's quite bleak when you're out there, isn't it? It's like, 'Oh, this is *not* NHS!'

SIMON: So, that's our hospital stories...

Looking back on that period, it's an era that's often characterised by the media headlines pitting Blur and Oasis against one another. But hearing Saffron and Simon reminisce about times gone by, it becomes apparent that, for the majority of acts from that time, there was no bad blood.

SAFFRON: I loved it, because there were very few of my kind and I was just with my mates! We got in a band, bought some equipment, set it up in someone's front room and taught ourselves. So the band went from there and it was the time of our lives, really. It was a dream.

SIMON: And there was a camaraderie, to be honest. I mean, our pals were Oasis and Weller. There was all that nonsense between Blur and Oasis - and now they play on each other's albums! I'm not sure about Liam; I don't think he's grown up. I hope he never does!

SAFFRON: He's like a Peter Pan character in that way! But I absolutely agree - this is him and he's sweet. He's got attitude but that's just Liam, isn't it? It's quite endearing when you get to know him.

SIMON: When [Liam and Noel] were friends, they were so funny together, but they scored a great big own goal. They had the world at their feet and they kicked it in their own bloody net!

As the pair reflect on the past, Mark sits taking it all in, waiting to tell his own stories of The Bluetones; the London quartet that debuted in 1993 with a sound that seamlessly blended the jangly guitar pop of The Smiths with the psychedelic swagger of The Stone Roses. Comprising Mark on vocals, Adam Devlin on guitar, Scott Morriss on bass and Eds Chesters on drums, they quickly garnered attention with their debut single, *Are You Blue Or Are You Blind?* and broke through with the No. 2 hit, *Slight Return*. Their debut album, 'Expecting To Fly', released in 1996, soared to the top of the UK Albums Chart, solidifying their status as one of the darlings of the Britpop scene.

MARK: I loved all the travel. I loved going to places that you never would have dreamt you'd get to go, like Tokyo or North America or places in Italy that you've only really seen in movies. I loved being in all these different places and meeting people from all around the world. I don't remember hanging out with other bands too much, because we were based out in west London and we weren't that close to the city, so we weren't really sort of socialising that much because none of us could drive...

> ***Just to be heard and to feel validated - for me and people like Skin, Justine, Lauren and Cerys - it definitely did feel like a ceiling has been smashed***
>
> **SAFFRON**

SAFFRON: I've been to a few clubs with you before!

MARK: We met that night - I think it was after an award ceremony, wasn't it? The NME Awards or something like that? We met in that bar and we sat there until they kicked us all out. And you charmed my socks off, as you do everybody...

SAFFRON: Really? They don't tell me!

SIMON: We were never invited to NME Awards ceremonies because they didn't like us.

SAFFRON: No, they hated me, but I loved it because I wanted them to! It was punk rock so they were going to anyway...

Saffron, of course, was one of the few leading ladies of the Britpop era, alongside powerhouse performers like Skunk Anansie's Skin, Elastica's Justine Friscmann and Kenickie's Lauren Laverne. For some, it would be daunting to step into such a male-dominated environment, but she had no reservations in making her mark on the mid-90s scene.

SAFFRON: That's what was so exciting - it really was a cultural and social revolution! I came from the acid house scene and I was doing all the illegal raves in all the clubs and warehouses with my mates, and then we just started writing our own songs. Suddenly, we've got lots of gigs and then we were on telly and it was really exciting. The fact that there were all these British bands that wrote their own songs, were truly independent and came from all different backgrounds, it was a great time that produced great music. Just to be heard and to feel validated - for me and people like Skin, Justine, Lauren and Cerys [Matthews, Catatonia] - it definitely did feel like a ceiling has been smashed. There were so many doors we had to kick down to even to get on a bill or to get time on the radio, because at the time radio refused to play women songwriters.

Saffron

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Simon Fowler

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

It was much the same worldwide, Saffron says, and she credits Gwen Stefani for breaking down another barrier with MTV, that led to Republica's *Ready To Go* video landing a spot on MTV.

SAFFRON: It was thanks to Gwen and No Doubt - who had been going for 10 years and were ready to split up - that we made it in the States, because the month we arrived MTV put their video to *Just A Girl* on heavy rotation and they did the same with ours and Garbage's as well. So suddenly, women were being played on the radio and it felt good. Finally! But I, bizarrely, became friends with someone who went to school with Gwen and when I was round at her house she was nearly in tears, saying: 'I don't know if I can do this anymore, because we've been going for all these years and they just won't play us on the radio'. I remember saying, 'No, you *can't* give up', because they were this amazing live band and just lovely people, and within that one month it changed. And they so deserved it.

It may have been a different time but while it presented its own set of obstacles, Mark, Saffron and Simon are unified in their gratitude to have emerged in the '90s and not today, in the digital era, when there's so much noise to break through thanks to the Internet, social media and streaming platforms.

SIMON: I don't understand any of it anymore - and I'm not interested, to be honest. I can't understand how a young band can make it, because you need to sell records to play bigger gigs. But how do you make a living out of selling records? I just really don't understand it at all. I think I'm part of a very lucky generation because number one, if you wanted to go into higher education then it was free and didn't cost 20 times your pay packet, and second, they made records! I'm starting to sound middle-aged, but I don't care quite frankly, because I'm right!

MARK: I think there was also more of a sense in those times that things in the pop field - which is I guess what we're in, pop-rock - were genuinely coming from the street and from the hearts and minds of young people. And it just feels to me today that a lot of pop music is written and made by middle-aged people and given to young performers, so there are no rough edges anymore. In the golden age of pop, in the '80s, you could switch on 'Top Of The Pops' and get eight different genres of music in half an hour. If you were to do that now, it would just be R&B. It would be all the same song.

SIMON: I've got a theory that what happened is that the record labels got tired and they wanted to leave the party - because it wasn't just the bands' party, let's face it, we all know where we used to go for a little pick-me-up. So after that wasn't working for the record labels, the powers that be got pissed off with it and decided to wash their hands of it, then Cowell-ism took over and that's why you've got so many solo male and female acts. Not many bands have come out in the last 10 years; there's The 1975, who are possibly the last in that breed, and everything else is in the image of Ed Sheeran.

SAFFRON: They failed to see the advancement in technology, so when the streamers came along, I know for a fact that they just completely dismissed them. Whereas what they should have done is bought them out immediately and taken them over. But they just couldn't see that anyone else or any future company could be a competitor to them. And sadly, that's what brought about the fall from grace of buying an actual record.

> ***When Liam and Noel were friends, they were so funny together, but they scored a great big own goal. They had the world at their feet and they kicked it in their own bloody net!***
>
> **SIMON**

Now, of course, physical media sales are on the rise year-on-year and although digital continues to be the most widely-accessible avenue for media consumption, CD, vinyl and cassette maintain a significant hold on the direction of the music charts. Case in point, fellow Britpopers Shed Seven earned their first-ever No. 1 album earlier this year, with Liam Gallagher and John Squire also matching the feat with impressive physical units - but what's the appeal?

SIMON: It could be that the kids who used to come and watch us have also now got kids who have grown up with their mum and dad's record collection...

MARK: You may be on to something there. I think there are a few social factors, because a lot of children have now flown the nest and parents of our generation have got disposable income once again. Also, their children are probably interested in the music that they've heard in their mum and dads' cars for the last two decades. There's probably a little bit of that. I think there is also a genuine kind of harkening back to the sense that, for want of a better word, there was something tangible and real about these records that doesn't necessarily exist so widely today. And it's still out there; there are still great artists making music, but they're certainly not in the mainstream. With Britpop, I don't think it has anything to do with patriotism - I think it's about relatability, because this music was made here in Britain, about our lives here in Britain and it's more relatable than say Blink-182 or the Foo Fighters. And I'm not denigrating anyone, but it's just one of those things. You know, we're all still going and we've still got a lot to offer. **RP**

● ***Britpop Classical plays in London, Birmingham and Manchester throughout June. Tickets are on sale now.***

THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH

Celebrating 30 years in pop, Aussie star **Peter Wilson** is back with a bang as he unleashes his 11th album, 'Touch', and looks ahead to a bold new era!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

It's 30 years since Australian singer and songwriter Peter Wilson made his debut with *I Wanna Dance* and, marking the milestone in style, he's back with his brand new album, 'Touch'.

His 10th and final LP on current label Energise, it features a heavy-hitting line-up of collaborators, including songwriters Michael Jay, Larry Forsberg and Mike Stock, and producers Pete Hammond, Italoconnection and Matt Pop.

When we last spoke two years ago, he insisted his previous record, 'The Great Unknown', would be his last - so as we sit down to chat about the new collection, it's the first question that arises...

GOLDEN AGE

"I loved 'The Great Unknown', but I noticed that my songwriting involvement had become less and less because I just became disinterested - and probably lazy..." admits the singer. The same can't be said for our interview; dialling in at 9pm UK time from Melbourne, bright and early at 7am, he's up, out and ready to face the day. It's been much the same for the past two years, which have seen Peter release the remix album, 'Time Machine', and two EPs - 'Saw The Signs' and 'We Are The Night'.

"I've got a love-hate relationship with music but there's always something that brings me back to it," he muses. "There's always something that inspires me and then I find a love for it again."

That came with his 2023 EPs - one in the classic PWL style and one leaning into Italo disco - at which time he started gathering tracks for what would become 'Touch'. "At the same time, Panther Rex contacted me. I'd covered his song, *Goodbye My Love*, and he said that he loved it and wanted to work with me," says Peter. "So that called me back into it, then Larry Forsberg said he had some new demos for me and we started working from there."

Having worked on several tracks for Peter's previous album, Larry and Peter collaborated on six co-writes, including title song *Touch (Too Much)* and *Cold As Ice*, *A Golden Age*, *When The Sun Begins To Fall*, *Forsake My Heart* and *Come On And Kiss Me*. What's now a 16-track record was originally going to be much shorter, but when songwriter Michael Jay - whose hits include Five Star's *If I Say Yes* and Martika's *Toy Soldiers* - reached out to get involved, the plans changed.

"I had pretty much finished what I thought was going to be an eight- or nine-track album with Larry when Michael Jay contacted me and said, 'I would love for your next album to be in my discography'," he grins. "At first I didn't know what he meant - like 'Why is someone like Michael Jay contacting me?' - but he made it clear that he wanted to do some songs. I thought we'd just do a couple, but he sent me about 20 songs and I ended up picking seven of them, which I recorded with various producers and they turned out to be great tracks."

It was another confidence boosting moment. "He's incredibly passionate about music and he loves the '80s as much as I do," adds Peter. "When I sent him the finished tracks, it was like a teenager getting excited about a new song after hearing it for the first time.

> ***I'VE GOT A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH MUSIC BUT THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT BRINGS ME BACK TO IT***

> ***I VERY MUCH WANT TO GO IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION WITH WHAT I DO NEXT***

So that really inspired me and to have someone on his level say to me, 'I want to work with you', was one of the best moments."

How, then, did he go about narrowing down a folder of demos to just seven? "There was a bit of pressure," he laughs, "but I just went with my heart. When I hear a track, it's got to speak to me pretty quickly. I loved every track he sent, but [lead single] *Imagine That* was the first one that I really loved and I steered them very much in the '80s, hi-NRG direction. So it's really the hook and the melody that I connect with and that's how I picked up all of the songs eventually."

He adds: "One track that was written in '88 with Martika and the demo he sent me was probably the closest to what I eventually recorded. They wanted to have a Dead Or Alive sound so that's what [producer] Matt Pop and I tried to do with it. And Michael really flipped when he heard that one - he loved it. He loved them all, actually!"

TOP OF THE WORLD

The follow-up, *Heard It In A Heartbeat*, is another track from the vault; the song, in fact, turns 40 this year, but is heard for the first time on 'Touch'. "The demo was a lot faster, kind of like [Bonnie Tyler's] *Holding Out For A Hero*, but there was an '80s song called *Last Call* by a group called Jo Lo with a great hi-NRG production and I knew I wanted to go own that path with the song," Peter muses. It wasn't always going to be a single: "We had other songs in mind, but the moment that it came through it was very clear that it had to be the second single. I even did a video for it - which isn't something that I regularly do - but I did it because it's probably one of my favourite singles I've ever recorded."

Over the years, Peter has been vocal in his desire not to make music videos, admitting he "didn't have the self-confidence within [his] own skin and [his] own body". Now 51, his mindset has changed. "I guess I like who I am and I like how I look," he smiles. "I figured, why not make a video? I'm just gonna give it a shot and if it doesn't work out, we don't have to use it. The director was really helpful in that respect and said, 'Don't worry, if it doesn't work out then it's just been a bit of fun' - and it ended up being so great! Now, I'm so comfortable within myself that I'm open to doing videos again. So I guess that song really gave me the final push and the final bit of confidence that I needed to change my outlook.

"With age comes acceptance of who you are; once you start to accept who you are, and you like who you are as a person, the other things become less important. How you look, all the things that you pick out on your body that you don't like about yourself

- you don't do that as much because you're more content and you're happier with who you are.

"I was walking to the bathroom before and I caught a glimpse of my reflection and saw something in my body that I didn't like. But I said to myself, 'Whatever, that's just me', and it didn't tear me up inside because it doesn't matter anymore," he adds.

It's representative of the dawning of a new era for Peter, with 'Touch' marking his final release on Energise records; the label he began working with first as a songwriter for artists such as Haywoode and Nicki French, before releasing his album 'Stereo' in 2011 - the first of 10 with the company. Why is now the time to move on? "I think most intense, long-term relationships have an end date and it was time," says Peter of his departure. "We've been working together for 15 years, we've had a great run, and they've done a lot for me. The investment they've put in me - I wouldn't have been able to work with the people I've worked with, so I appreciate that. People like Nicki French, Rozalla, Sean Smith, Haywoode... I guess there was a family vibe and I was one of the stable. It was time to move on and it's something they support, but I'll always be grateful."

INTO THE LIGHT

Before leaving Energise, though, he did find time to fulfil one lifetime ambition - well, sort of... When we last spoke with the Aussie star, Peter told us: "As an artist, I think the only thing that I would ever want to do that I haven't done would be to record a song directly with Mike Stock. If I can ever do that, then I can retire happy." A lifelong PWL fan, Peter first tried to meet the legendary songwriter and producer back in the late 1980s when he headed Down Under to work with Jason Donovan. "I remember me and a couple of high school friends tried to go to the recording studio to find him, then we went to Mushroom Records - who actually let us in the building - and I played them my demo, which was me singing over *Nothing Can Divide Us* or something. I was 16 and it was *really* bad, hence they showed us the door quite quickly," he cluckles.

Although he hasn't been in the studio with the SAW legend this time around, 'Touch' does feature a very special Mike Stock original. "A song came my way called *Everything We Had* that he wrote with his son, and the moment I heard it I knew straight away," he grins. "It was a challenge vocally, because it's such a big song, but I had the confidence to give it a try and it turned out very, very well. Panther Rex produced my version and we got Mike Stock's permission and

> ***WITH AGE COMES ACCEPTANCE OF WHO YOU ARE AND THE OTHER THINGS BECOME LESS IMPORTANT***

> ***GETTING BACK INTO WRITING, LIKE I DID WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER AND IN MY 20S, IS MORE OF A FOCUS FOR ME NOW***

blessing to keep his arrangement, but it's such a great track. I'm really glad to have it and I think it's one of his best songs that he's written in a very, very long time. So I'm proud that it's going to be mine."

It's a compromise but, as Peter plans to have greater involvement behind the scenes on his next project, one that he's happy to make. "If he could produce a track for me one day, then I would be very much into that, but with what I do beyond 'Touch' I'm writing, I'm playing the synths and I'm programming, which is something I'm really enjoying. Getting back into writing, like I did when I was a teenager and when I was in my 20s, is more of a focus for me now. And I very much want to go in a different direction with what I do next..."

Despite having written hundreds of songs, he isn't trained musically; he did piano lessons when he was seven years old "and the teacher became frustrated with me, because the whole time she was teaching me she would try to get me to read music and I was just playing by ear," he laughs. "But when I was a teenager, we had a really great music department at school [Camberwell High - which he attended at the same time as Kylie and Dannii, no less] with synthesisers and drum machines and 4-track recorders, so I started playing with those and over the years I got more into the singing and the writing."

It was while performing on the competition circuit in Melbourne that Peter was put in contact with David Wilks, who wrote his first track, *I Wanna Dance*, which got heavy rotation on a local radio station and led to his first label, Colossal Records, reaching out and releasing the single in 1994. He released three singles before "management issues and disagreements" led to the end of the deal in the mid-'90s, but half a decade later an old friend, John Collins, who went on to write Gina G's *Fresh!* and *Gimme Some Love*, lured him back into the biz and he began to work with acts including Amanda Lear, Samantha Fox and Sabrina.

An album on Klone Records ('Follow Me' (2007)) paved the way for the last 15 years with Energise, but is there anything he hasn't ticked off the bucket list? "Well, I can't act, so you won't see me on 'Neighbours' anytime soon," he laughs. "At some point, I want to travel to the US and write with Michael and he's said that that's something we can do. That's a huge opportunity that I want to take up and I think it'll happen in the next 12 to 18 months. And then to be back in the UK. I want to go back. My last trip was last year and I wasn't in the best place, so I want to go back and really have a great time, because I really do love it!" **RP**

● ***'Touch' is out June 7 on Energise.***

(RE)INTRODUCING...

TOM BALL

Thanks to appearances on the UK and US editions of 'Got Talent', vocal powerhouse **Tom Ball** is already a household name - but arriving with his debut album, he proves himself to be a fine singer-songwriter too!

"If you write it down in a list, it seems a little bit unimaginable," laughs Tom Ball of the past two years, which saw the secondary school drama and music teacher go from the classroom to the 'Britain's Got Talent' stage, where he finished in the Top 3 and was praised by Amanda Holden as "one of the best singers we've had in 16 years".

That was in 2022 - the following year saw him cross over Stateside for a stint on 'America's Got Talent: All Stars', on which he was the last Brit standing, before heading into the studio to record his debut album, 'Curtain Call', out this month.

"I've always wanted to record music and have an album and write songs," he smiles of the record, which showcases his lush, powerful vocals on a combination of classic covers and slick originals, such as bouncy single *The Best Part* and the warming *Winter Song*. "I've been writing songs since I was a little boy, but after I got the Golden Buzzer in the first round in America, it was on the flight home that my manager said: 'You need to get in the studio and start recording'. So we independently recorded and released three songs, which led to the record deal and quickly blossomed into an incredible relationship with the team at Westway".

Launched just three years ago, the label is home to stars of the Broadway and West End stages, such as Kerry Ellis, Ramin Karimloo and Rachel Tucker. Having already enjoyed global exposure, Tom could have taken his pick of labels, but it was the idea of working with label boss Neil O'Brien that convinced him Westway was the right fit.

"He is one of the most hardworking, driven and visionary people, so when I was talking to him I got excited about the future - and that makes a massive difference," Tom smiles. "I also love musical theatre so it was a really obvious choice for me. I wanted to be in that world and potentially open up those doors at some point to maybe appear in the West End."

He may have his eye on the role of Valjean in 'Les Misérables', but for now Tom's joined forces with another West End superstar, Lucie Jones, on the new track *Goodbye*. "That day was very special," he grins. "Lucie is someone I've looked up to for such a long time. I've seen her in 'Waitress', I saw her in 'Les Mis', and then to be in the room in the studio with her and for her to sing one of the songs that I wrote with Mike Stevens and Jay James was really lovely. Such great friendships have been struck there, which is nice."

It's not all musical theatre-oriented, with collaborators including legendary songwriter and producer Eliot Kennedy (Celine Dion, Bryan Adams) and Take That star Gary Barlow also among the impressive credits on the record. "I've been so fortunate to be in the studio with some really talented songwriters and musicians," he grins. "It's been amazing, especially for this first album, being in the studio with such a vast array of songwriters. Watching them, listening to them and seeing how they work has been so valuable. It allowed me to come back into my own studio and say, 'Well,

> I got on an open top bus in Barcelona and these two Spanish people came over going 'Tom Ball! Tom Ball!' - it does blow your mind!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

I'm going to adopt how Elliot Kennedy writes a song and I'm going to start doing that', or, 'OK, Matthew Nolan, let's try his method'. It's been really valuable."

Tom's been writing from a young age - "I remember me being in the back of the car with my sister and making up silly songs - that's probably where it started," he laughs - but the experience of crafting the record has only strengthened that creative muscle. "You sometimes hear the stories of musicians going, 'It just came to me', and I've never had that moment until *Home Again*, which I wrote at 2am," he recalls. "I woke up and I knew that I had to write a song, so I did it in about 30 minutes, recorded it on my phone and sent it off to my manager, then went to bed. And it's on the album!"

It was, he says, after the first 'Britain's Got Talent' audition aired that Tom realised how much his life would change - even if he did return to school after his run on the show to finish up classes for the year. "I couldn't let my kids down; I'd committed to them for the year so I was there for the year," he maintains. "And those last eight weeks were my favourite, because every single student was so supportive and lovely. They came across quite proud that their teacher had gone and done that."

Even after making a name for himself in the States, though, the vocalist was stunned by just how well known he was globally. "I love open top buses when I go to new places, because sometimes you're only there for like a couple of hours and you can jump on and see everything," he admits. "Anyway, I got on one in Barcelona and these two Spanish people came over going 'Tom Ball! Tom Ball!' - it does blow your mind!"

Looking to the future, his horizons are only set to broaden with Tom's sights set on the next five years as he settles in for the long haul. "When I first signed with my manager, he put together a five-year plan and the second year consisted of going on tour and releasing an album - and on the two-year mark we've done both of them, which is really exciting," he beams.

"For the five-year plan, it's essentially not much of the same; continue to tour, potentially branch back out to America and into other European countries, and create and release music." **RP**

● ***'Curtain Call' is out May 24 on Westway.***

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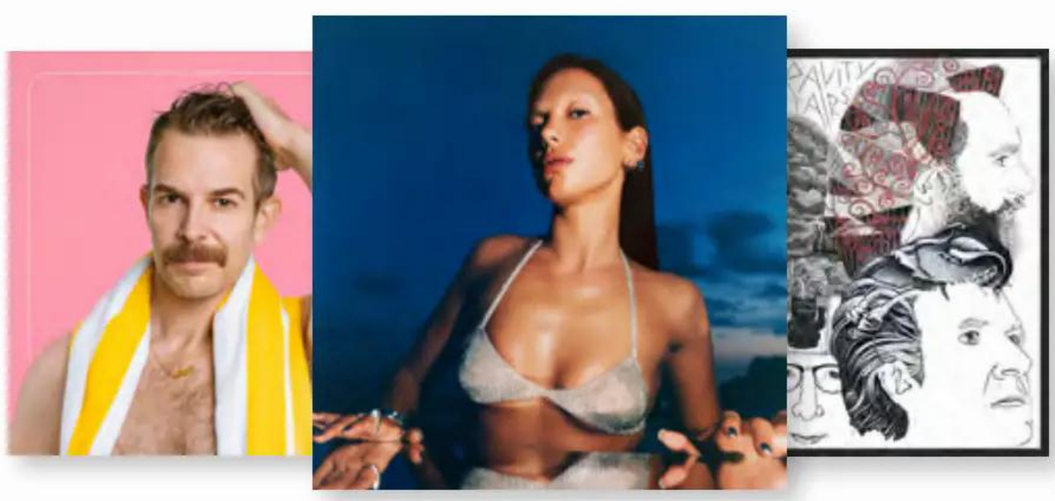
RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

79
A PLACE IN YOUR HEART

Gabrielle digs deep on first original album in six years



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Bright Light Bright Light | Crowded House
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Busted | China Crisis | David Bowie
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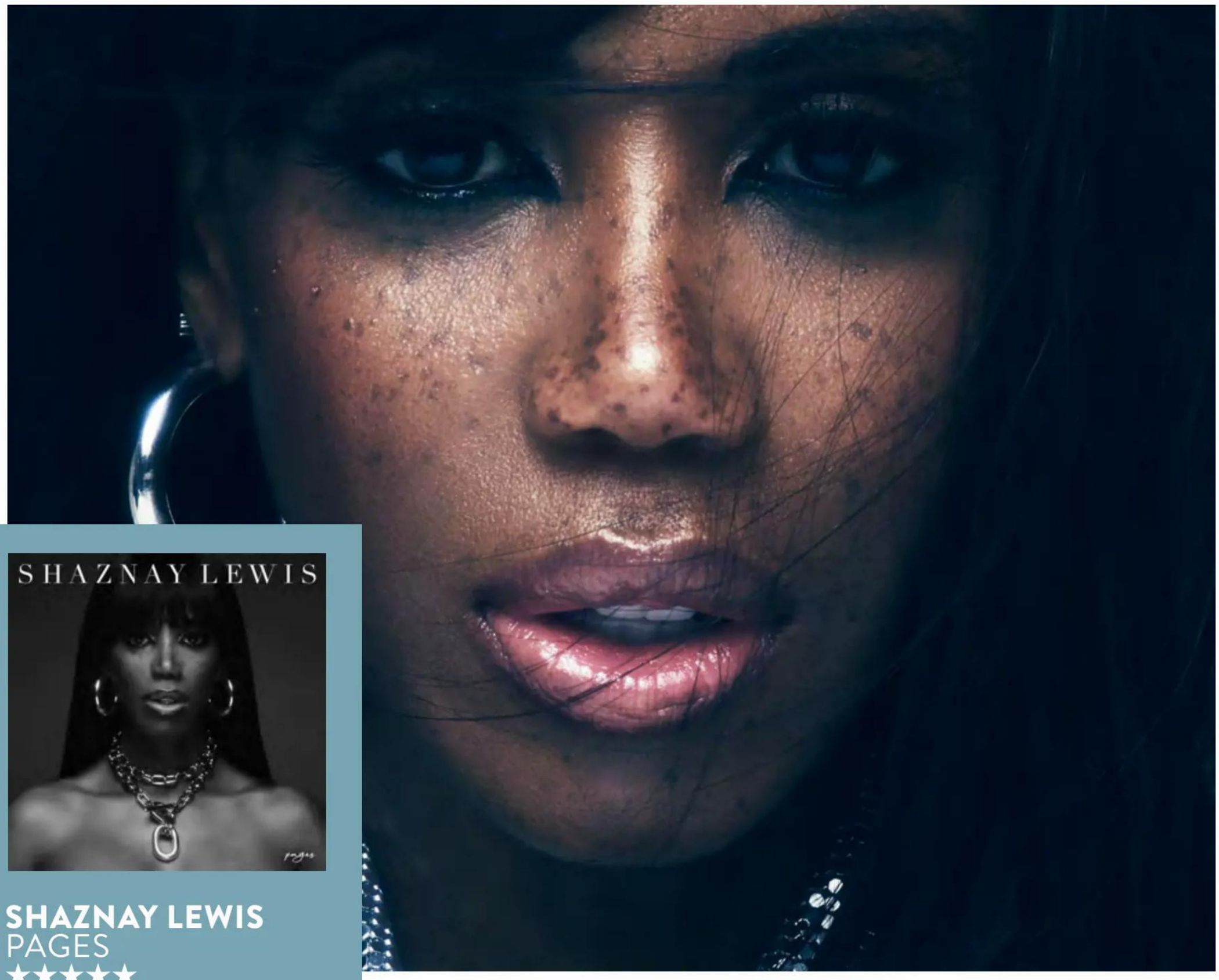
Keane | Queen | Ricky Martin | Toyah

RATINGS EXPLAINED: ★★★★★ BRILLIANT ★★★★☆ STRONG ★★★☆☆ GOOD ★★☆☆☆ AVERAGE ★☆☆☆☆ POOR

PHOTO JAHMENE DOUGLAS

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS



SHAZNAY LEWIS
PAGES
★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 17 *1.9.7.5***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP White Vinyl**

Twenty years after her last outing, All Saints' Shaznay Lewis makes a spectacular return with her second solo album, 'Pages' - the most accomplished work of her three-decade career.

Stacked with 12 new original compositions from the singer-songwriter responsible for such classics as *Never Ever* and *Pure Shores*, the album resists the urge to lean into the sounds that took the group to the top of the charts and, instead, showcases the versatility of one of British pop's greats.

"I do feel as though I'm starting again, and making this record with some special people has been an exhilarating experience," says Shaznay of the creative process. "I felt free for the first time."

Opening with the epic *Missiles*, she makes a bold statement that commerciality isn't the name of the game here; instead, 'Pages' veers between genres, from psychedelic soul to slick R&B, and is oftentimes laced with lush cinematic strings that elevate the work to new heights.

The storming *Got To Let Go* is the closest to her work with All Saints, while the bouncy *Supposed To Be* and pulsing *Tears To The Floor* channel Shaznay's pop sensibilities with a slick contemporary edge.

Elsewhere on the set, the soulful singles *Miracle* and *Kiss Of Life* usher in a new era, while the breakbeats of the Shola Ama/General Levy collaboration *Good Mourning* build upon her musical sensibilities while showcasing the impressive vocals that run through the record.

If her 2004 debut 'Open' saw Shaznay attempt to capitalise on All Saints' stratospheric success, 'Pages' sees her at ease with a relaxed yet faultless delivery throughout that cuts through at all the right moments - like on *Bruises* and *Peaches*, both of which pack a poignant lyric and showcase another facet of her songwriting.

Meanwhile *Pick You Up*, featuring a spoken monologue by Self Esteem, is a profound pairing, with Shaznay giving her seal of approval to one of the most exciting artists in the charts today.

Closing with the bombastic *Hearts In Danger*, Shaznay cements her position as a solo artist who, 30 years into her career, remains at the peak of her creativity and, with vocals that match those of her earliest recordings, there's no doubt that now is her time.

It's a testament to her lifelong passion for music: "For this album, myself and the people I worked with were making it for one reason only: to just make music that we felt was good, and for people to take and enjoy..."

PHOTO ASCAR J RYAN

GABRIELLE
A PLACE IN YOUR HEART
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 10 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP**
Transparent Curacao Blue Vinyl

For over 30 years, Gabrielle has been a staple in British pop and on her latest album, 'A Place In Your Heart', she leans into a broad range of influences for a showcase of everything she does best.

Arriving on the back of the covers collection 'Do It Again', which marked the Londoner's return to the Top 5 of the UK Albums Chart for the first time since the '90s, the new record boasts 12 original tracks, co-written by Gabrielle, that veer away from the 'soul' label she's been plastered with throughout her career and instead tap into a sometimes angsty, often blues-leaning soundscape that brings to the fore another dimension of her vocal and songwriting abilities.

Opening with the pre-release single, *Sorry*, the tone is immediately set, with the star who was once *'ready to rise again'* in the depths of despair at the end of a relationship, beyond the point of no return.

Its mid-tempo energy carries through much of the set, which sees Gabrielle work through a range of emotions in some of the most introspective and contemplative lyrics of her career. The guitar-driven *Change* sees her declare *'The woman that I used to be / She's gone forever'*, while stirring anthem *Lifeline* looks outwards, tackling contemporary cultural issues and life in the UK today.

Lead single and title song, *A Place In Your Heart*, is among the more direct pop cuts on the LP and, alongside closing number, the driving *Conquer*, sees the artist reemerge with a fresh mindset and a focus firmly set on the future. As she says on the latter: *'The battle is won'*.

A record that feels decades in the making, the eighth studio set from Gabrielle sees the singer-songwriter step outside of all preconceived notions of a 'Gabrielle album' and offer up a body of work that feels current and relevant to the singer as she stands today.

It's reflected in *Good Enough*; a self-love anthem featuring fellow British singer-songwriter Mahalia - who makes no secret of Gabrielle's influence - in a profound vocal trade-off between two of pop's strongest female performers, transcending generations.

It's a heavy listen from the singer-songwriter that, in navigating her way through an emotional rollercoaster, is underpinned by the undeniable charm that earned Gabrielle a place in our hearts all those years ago.

PHOTO UZO OLEH

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
STILL KIDS
★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 17 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 3D CD Box, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl**

New Kids On The Block return in fine form with 'Still Kids' - their first studio album in over a decade.

A collection that leans into the group's collective history while bringing their sound up to date, the follow-up to 2013's '10' ranks among the strongest of their career.

Donnie Wahlberg, who is billed as creative director on the record, says: "It's the most mature album we've ever made. Yet it's the most fun and most comfortable album we've ever made.

"This album, more than any other, is bringing the New Kids and the fans full circle. It's about hope and possibilities and being ourselves."

That's apparent on the lead single, *Kids*, which leans into an '80s soundscape, harking back to the group's formative years, with a lyric that celebrates their 40 years history while sounding effortlessly current.

Striking across the LP is the five-piece's ability to reference their past while presenting a solid body of work that holds its own against today's biggest boy bands. Opener *Magic* roots the record in pure pop territory and serves as a reintroduction to fans, while *Long Time Coming* references the time between albums with a cool pop/R&B direction with tight harmonies that showcase their impressive vocals.

Across 14 songs, the boys offer a smorgasbord of styles, from the sweet ballad *A Love Like This* - released to mark 35 years of New Kids On The Block Day - to the electro-pop excellence of *Dance With You* and country-pop *Get Down* with DJ Jazzy Jeff.

He's one of two guest stars on the LP, with '80s legend Taylor Dayne trading off sensational vocals on the throwback anthem, *Old School Love*.

Towards the end of the album, *Better Days* reflects the group today: five sons, husbands and fathers, who balance their careers as one of the biggest pop groups of all time with their respective family lives.

What radiates through the album is New Kids On The Block's sheer joy in getting back in the studio and making new music, four decades after their formation, which reinforces the band's status as one of the very best of their generation.

PHOTO AUSTIN HARGRAVE

CROWDED HOUSE
GRAVITY STAIRS
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 31 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Blue Vinyl**

With their eighth album, 'Gravity Stairs', Crowded House get introspective on a body of work that taps into questions of life and death and frontman Neil Finn faces up to his mortality.

The first LP from the group in three years sees Finn, Nick Seymour, Mitchell Froom, and Finn's sons Elroy and Liam deliver a sharp, adventurous body of work that speaks to their continued creativity and knack for crafting classic, timeless hits.

Centred on a curious title - "It's a metaphor for getting a little older and becoming aware of your own mortality, your own physicality," Finn says. "Things are getting a little harder, and there's more determination needed to get to the top, but there's still the same compulsion to climb them." - much of the subject matter in the lyrics sees the frontman, now in his mid-60s, confronting various aspects of everyday living.

Opener *Magic Piano* sets itself apart from anything the band has created prior, reading as a love letter to music and a demonstration of its endless possibilities that unfurls across the recording.

Life's Imitation stacks harmonies over a narrative dreamed up at the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic, while navigating the need for personal connection at the height of isolation, while *All That I Can Ever Own* questions the ties we create with material goods and reaches a jubilant conclusion that, ultimately, there are things in life we can't control.

Lead single *Oh Hi* is among the more commercial, radio-friendly offerings on 'Gravity Stairs', with follow-up single, *Teenage Summer*, another crowd-pleaser that the group tested out in earlier live shows.

One of the most personal cuts, *Some Greater Plan (For Claire),* draws on Finn's father's war diaries and the memory of a whirlwind Mediterranean romance, while closing number, *Night Song*, looks outwards and builds around the backdrop of an audio recording from his hotel room at 3am, featuring an uncredited man's unfiltered ramblings from the street below.

Close to four decades into their career, Crowded House could comfortably rest on the laurels of the past, but instead they continue to push themselves creatively and, in doing so, deliver some of their finest work to date.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

KIESZA
DANCING AND CRYING: VOL 1
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 24 *ECLYPCE***
FORMATS: **Digital**

Canadian star Kiesza is breaking the mold as she returns with the first installment of her latest project, 'Dancing And Crying'.

With two albums under her belt - including 2014's 'Sound Of A Woman', featuring the UK No. 1 hit *Hideaway* - this time around she's switching things up and offering the first taste of the project with a six-track collection that leans into her commercial past while tapping into the sonic influences that inspired her over the years.

A collaboration with Sugar Jesus, the title song blends electro-pop and house and forms the basis of the project, of which Kiesza says: "'Dancing And Crying' is an Opus. A series of contrasting musical ideas, woven together by a foundation of house beats and basslines, bridges the gap between my folk origins and the dance music that marked my place on the global map."

Heaven Ain't Calling once again taps into house, amid a global resurgence in recent years, while the storming club banger *I Go Dance* is a riot of an anthem that's sure to prove a hit on the dance floor.

They're the most commercially accessible numbers; the other half of 'Dancing And Crying' leans into an Americana-inspired soundscape, with the acoustic guitar intro to *Strangers* building up to a storming electro-country chorus, with Kiesza's impressive vocals the thread that holds the set together.

The Mysterious Disappearance Of Etta Place follows a similar formula, with a lyric inspired by the mysterious wild west figure who rode with Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and disappeared in the mists of history and mythology, while closing number *Go Back* turns up the electricity and brings in the beats for a euphoric outro that leaves everything on the floor.

It taps into a sense of escapism innate to the project, which is representative of Kiesza's journey over the past decade: "This new volume of current music comes out of a personal chapter of letting go and embracing the way things are, as they unfold. The nucleus of this sound-storm is held together by a community that has been dancing, crying and growing together through the entire journey."

Tied together with an audio-visual series of radio plays and spaghetti western music videos, it's the beginning of a bold new chapter that's already delivered some of the best-realised work of Kiesza's career to date.

PHOTO STEPHEN KOZMENIUK

DUA LIPA
RADICAL OPTIMISM
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 3 *Warner***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Blue & White Vinyl, 1LP Curacao Blue Vinyl, 1LP Dark Blue Vinyl, 1LP Glow In The Dark Vinyl, 1LP Red Vinyl, 1LP Silver Vinyl, Cassette**

Pop superstar Dua Lipa heads down fresh, sun-soaked avenues as she returns with her third studio album, 'Radical Optimism'.

The follow-up to 2020's 'Future Nostalgia' – a game-changing album for Lipa, which saw her lean into classic pop and disco elements with influences of dance and electronic music – is billed as an homage to '90s Britpop, with influences of psychedelic pop and the UK's rave culture.

"A couple years ago, a friend introduced me to the term 'Radical Optimism'," she says. "It's a concept that resonated with me, and I became more curious as I started to play with it and weave it into my life. It struck me – the idea of going through chaos gracefully and feeling like you can weather any storm.

"At the same time, I found myself looking through the music history of psychedelia, trip hop, and Britpop. It has always felt so confidently optimistic to me, and that honesty and attitude is a feeling I took into my recording sessions."

Lead single, *Houdini*, is among the stronger material on offer, with co-production and instrumentation from Tame Impala's Kevin Parker, along with production from Danny L Harle and writing from Caroline Ailin and Tobias Jesso, Jr. It's a hypnotic introduction to the album which, across 11 songs, reinforces Lipa's position as one of today's pop greats – even if it doesn't always live up to expectations.

Opening number, *End Of An Era*, taps into the aforementioned psychedelia and is an invitation to join the hitmaker in her world of 'Radical Optimism', but the bulk of the album is more European pop sounding than is perhaps intended, with the pre-release singles *Training Season* and *Illusion* both strong showings, yet not so obviously in line with the Massive Attack and Primal Scream influences she cites.

That's not to say it's not a strong pop record and songs like the bittersweet make-or-break *These Walls* – which sees Lipa approaching the end of her relationship – and *Falling Forever*, led by a powerful vocal and irresistible hook, see her at her best. *Anything For Love*, which opens with chatter in the studio and builds from a piano ballad to full production, and *French Exit*, with its raw, driving percussion, both point towards the sounds she sought to capture.

But come closing number, *Happy For You* – another breakup song that opens with birdsong and talks about moving on – it becomes clear that, at its core, Lipa's relationship is the central character on this record and, instead of letting loose and diving into new waters, 'Radical Optimism' is at its best when Lipa sticks to what she knows best: solid dance pop.

PHOTO TYRONE LEBON

TOM BALL
CURTAIN CALL
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 24 Westway**
FORMATS: **CD**

Arriving on the back of a pair of 'Got Talent' stints that saw vocal sensation Tom Ball wow audiences in the UK and US, the singer-songwriter finally emerges with his debut studio album.

Clocking in at 13 songs - a mix of cover versions and originals - the album places the former teacher's vocals at the fore, while showcasing his plethora of talents on an array of new songs written by the multi-instrumentalist alongside the likes of Eliot Kennedy and Gary Barlow.

The concept put his fans - who first connected with Tom over two years ago, when he made his ITV debut - first. "I knew certain songs had to be in there for myself as well as for my fans," he says of the 85 million views his performances have had online.

"*Writing's On The Wall* had to be the first track on the album; it's where it started with 'Britain's Got Talent' and changed my life. It made sense to top the album with that and tail the album with the last song I sung on 'BGT', *I (Who Have Nothing)*."

Reflecting on themes such as his relationship with his wife Hannah, a paediatrics nurse, and also his battle with type 1 diabetes, the original songs lure listeners closer to the artist behind the music, with the first original single, *The Best Part*, highlighting the dichotomy between life as a jet-setting singer and his inner home bird. A feelgood jam, it proves he's every inch the pop star.

Meanwhile, a stunning, powerhouse duet with West End sensation Lucie Jones - written by Tom with Mike Stevens and Jay James - hints that a new leading man may have emerged.

"The song is thankfully not related to me in any way, as it's about a relationship that's broken down," he adds. "We knew we wanted it as a duet and Lucie Jones is absolutely sensational. I'm so honoured to have her on the album."

At times, 'Curtain Call' leans a little too heavily into theatrics and reads more as an audition piece than a body of work - even though his delivery is, admittedly and unquestionably, brilliant. But the strength of his co-writes is enough to leave us longing for a full set of originals which, based on the material on offer, could send Tom's star shooting even higher.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT
ENJOY YOUTH
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 17 *YSKWN***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, Assorted Alternate Colour Artwork Vinyl, Assorted Alternate Colour Artwork Cassette**

On his fifth studio album, Bright Light Bright Light taps into a vibrant sense of nostalgia for a body of work that looks to the past of the man behind the music.

While his previous release, 'Fun City', leaned into LGBTQ+ nightlife with a winning run of collaborations with acts such as Scissor Sisters' Jake Shears and Erasure's Andy Bell, this time around he turns the energy up and the strobe lights on for an all-out pop celebration.

"Things are pretty shit at the moment and there are times where I really feel like magic has been taken out of the world," he says of the collection. "I wanted to remind myself that life is pretty special and just focus on the joy we do have."

Opener *You Want My...* proves singer-songwriter Rod Thomas' pop prowess, with an earworm chorus, a spoken-word middle eight that harks back to the classic sounds of Pet Shop Boys' *West End Girls* and Madonna's *Vogue*, and a tongue-in-cheek reference to George Michael's *I Want Your Sex* in the title.

Revived leans into '90s house influences while the pulsing beats of *Down To One* capture the lust and euphoria of the dance floor. The single *Boys Etc.*, with its opening bars of brass and sax, talks about taking a chance at happiness, with an overarching optimism that runs through the set.

'Enjoy Youth' packs an impressive run of collaborations, not only with writers and producers such as Ian Masterson, Jon Shave and Richard X, but with a winning array of guest features including dance star Ultra Naté, who lends vocals to the single *Every Emotion*.

Grammy nominee Mykal Kilgore appears on the vibrant, feelgood *Heartslap*, while Beth Hirsch - who features on Air's classic album, 'Moon Safari' - sings on the title song, which serves as a tribute to his longtime friend Janice.

Arriving ahead of Pride Month and a return to the UK for a run of shows including Mighty Hoopla, it's among the strongest work of his career to date and reminder that Bright Light Bright Light remains one of British pop's best kept secrets.

PHOTO AUSTIN RUFFER

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

SUSIE VANNER
THAT KIND OF LOVE
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 17 *Dolce Vanner***
FORMATS: **CD**

Northern soul star turned Bond Girl Susie Vanner returns with her second studio album and her first to feature original material.

It was back in 2020 that the star - who signed with RCA back in the 1960s and released a run of singles, before finding success as an actress and model - finally arrived with her debut album 'In These Shoes', but this time she switches things up with a mix of cover versions and cool originals that fuse smooth jazz with delicate pop.

On the record, recorded with Grammy Award-winning producer Kipper Eldridge, with new tracks co-written with Judi Tzuke, she says: "With this album, I wanted to retain some of the Jazz flavours from my debut album, but add a more pop sensibility to it.

"We have some of the best musicians in London playing on this record but having them play on more simple creates a greater depth and musical meaning."

While her previous offering largely played it safe when it came to song choices, this time around the multi-hyphenate reimagines recordings by everyone from Robbie Williams (*Feel*) and The Rolling Stones (*Satisfaction*), to The Weeknd (*Earned It*), all tapping into her sumptuous, laid-back style and underpinned by superb instrumentation.

Sheryl Crow's *All I Wanna Do* is backed by infectious brass that amplifies the joy in Susie's vocal delivery, having rediscovered her voice decades after her debut, while *Don't Dream It's Over* - originally by Crowded House - is another poignant moment.

The real gems on 'That Kind Of Love', though, are the original numbers, which see the performer come into her own and prove she's every inch the pop star. Pre-release single *The Light's Gone* opens the record in style and proves Judie Tzuke is the perfect collaborator, while the title song continues the sophisticated lounge style that's become something of a signature for Susie.

Alongside the main album, a series of remixes from the likes of Until Dawn, Cahill and Almighty take her sound in a fresh, dance floor friendly direction that opens up new possibilities going forward.

Building upon the foundations of her debut, 'That Kind Of Love' is another strong showing from the star as she finally fulfills her musical ambitions and, although it doesn't deviate too far from the blueprint, it's the record's handful of great originals that stand out as the real fruits of the project.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SIA
REASONABLE WOMAN
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 3 *Atlantic***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Pink Vinyl, 1LP Quartz Vinyl, 1LP Tangerine Vinyl**

Returning with her first body of work since 2021's 'Music' (her 10th album overall), Sia proves herself to be in fine voice - even if the end result is patchy.

A melting pot of styles - from straight-up radio pop to tracks with disco, hip-hop and R&B flavours - the Australian star's determination to push herself sonically is admirable across the 15 tracks, among which she occasionally strikes gold.

I Forgive You builds with a hypnotic piano line over which Sia delivers an impassioned, heartfelt vocal among the finest of her career, while closing number *Rock And Balloon* is another soaring moment that brings out the best in the star.

On the flipside, the Paris Hilton collaboration, *Fame Won't Love You*, taps into her pop sensibilities while exploring the pitfalls of 21st Century life in the spotlight, alongside a collaborator who is a poster girl for 'celebrity'.

Throughout her career, Sia has made no secret of the challenges she faced due to health issues and addiction battles, with much of the lyrical content on 'Reasonable Woman' tapping into her mindset of pushing forward and overcoming such strife.

It's not the only time she leans into the past, with the earworm Kylie Minogue collaboration *Dance Alone* - a highlight of the set - drawing comparisons to her 2015 single *Cheap Thrills*. It, of course, pays off.

But at times, she tries too hard and the result reads as overproduced yet undercooked; whether it's the 12x repetition of the title in the chorus of *Gimme Love* or the trap-influenced Chaka Khan collaboration, *Immortal Queen*, with lyrical touchpoints from 'The Matrix' to Queen Victoria pointing towards a lack of self editing (despite a slick performance from Khan).

It's a problem that underpins much of the over-bloated set which, in truth, could be cut down to two-thirds of its size and offer a far more cohesive and digestible listening experience.

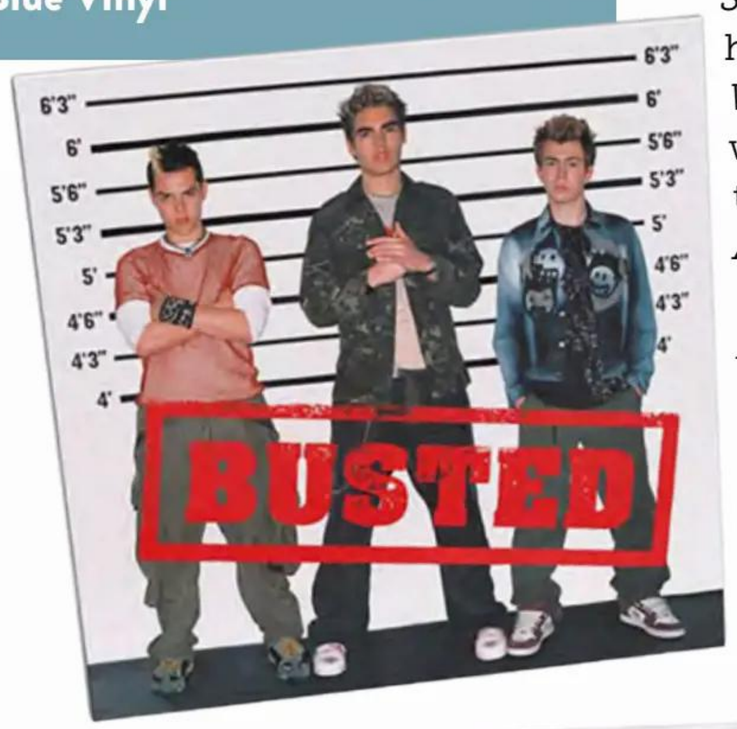
There's no denying Sia is among the finest vocalists in the charts today but, having also proven herself on several occasions to be a premier songwriter, her latest work doesn't quite live up to that legacy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

BUSTED
BUSTED; A PRESENT FOR EVERYONE
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **May 10 *Busted Live LLP***
FORMATS: **1LP Red Vinyl; 1LP Blue Vinyl**

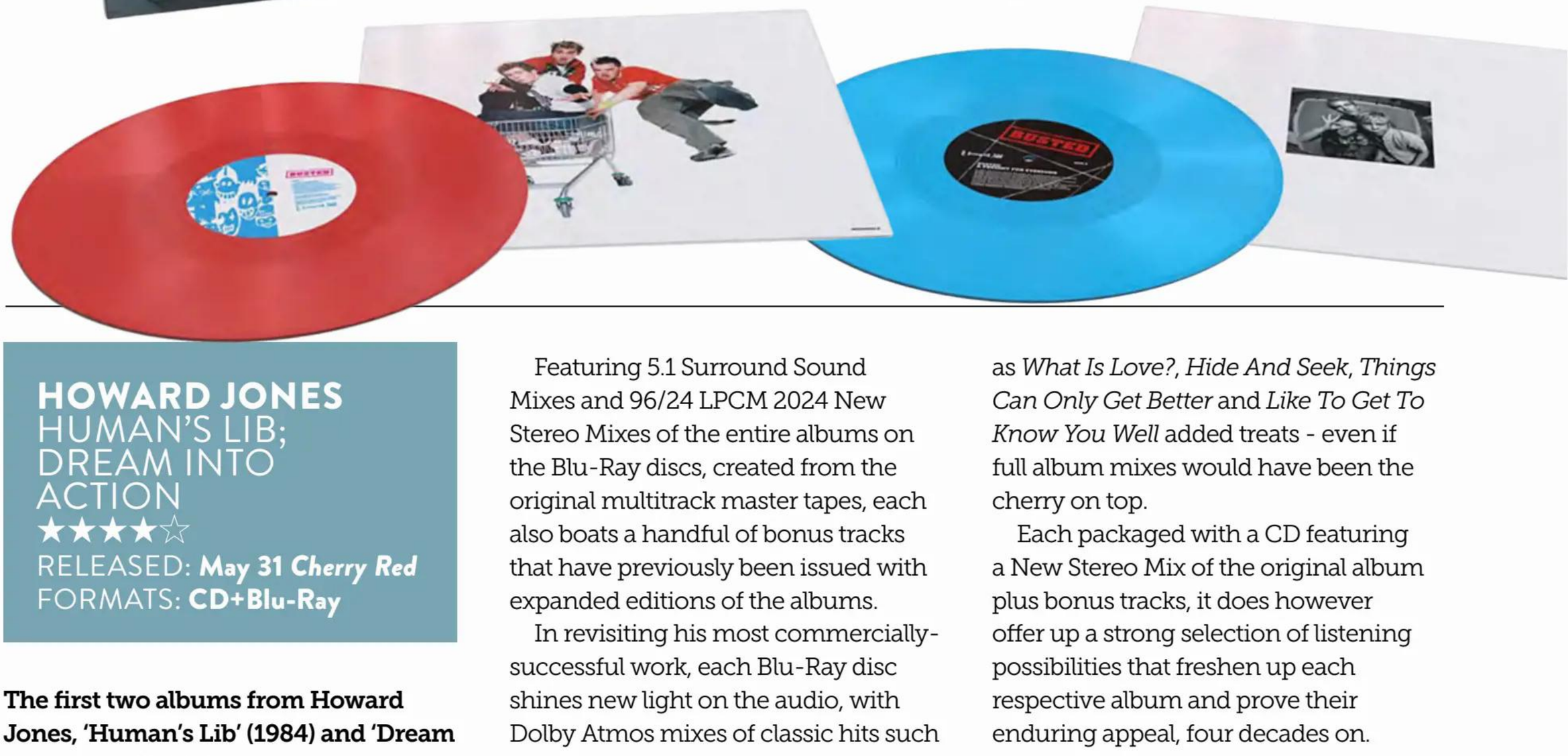


On the back of the band's renaissance and their chart-topping 'Greatest Hits 2.0' album of re-recorded classics, Busted are revisiting their original albums in their classic forms for a new series of vinyl reissues.

Their eponymous debut sent the group to the top of the charts with *You Said No* and delivered iconic hits such as *Year 3000* and *What I Go To School For*, while its follow-up continued the band's success with *Air Hostess*, *Crashed The Wedding* and *Thunderbirds Are Go*.

Now available on vinyl for the first time, the records are pressed on red and blue wax, respectively, each featuring the original tracklist.

There's no additional content meaning the bonus tracks from each release are missing, but given its the first time each record has been pressed on vinyl it's sill a treat to see the pop-punk group early work revisited.



HOWARD JONES
HUMAN'S LIB; DREAM INTO ACTION
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **May 31 *Cherry Red***
FORMATS: **CD+Blu-Ray**

The first two albums from Howard Jones, 'Human's Lib' (1984) and 'Dream Into Action' (1985), arrive on double-disc sets, each containing CD and Blu-Ray editions of the records.

Featuring 5.1 Surround Sound Mixes and 96/24 LPCM 2024 New Stereo Mixes of the entire albums on the Blu-Ray discs, created from the original multitrack master tapes, each also boats a handful of bonus tracks that have previously been issued with expanded editions of the albums.

In revisiting his most commercially-successful work, each Blu-Ray disc shines new light on the audio, with Dolby Atmos mixes of classic hits such as *What Is Love?*, *Hide And Seek*, *Things Can Only Get Better* and *Like To Get To Know You Well* added treats - even if full album mixes would have been the cherry on top.

Each packaged with a CD featuring a New Stereo Mix of the original album plus bonus tracks, it does however offer up a strong selection of listening possibilities that freshen up each respective album and prove their enduring appeal, four decades on.

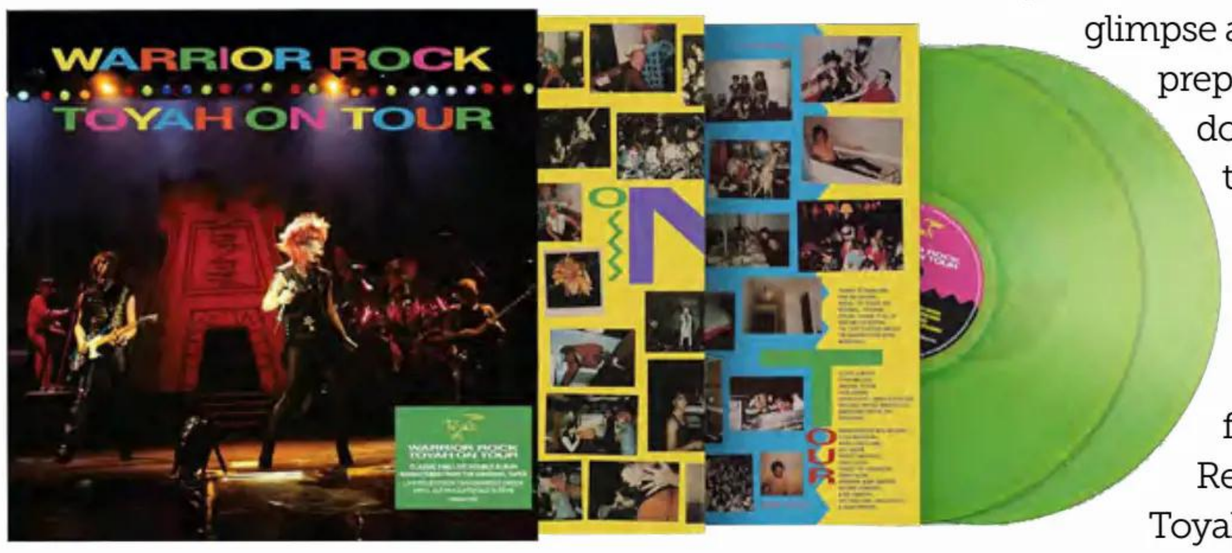
TOYAH
WARRIOR ROCK
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **May 17 *Cherry Red***
FORMATS: **3CD, 2LP**
Transparent Green Vinyl

Remastered and expanded, Toyah's UK Top 20 'Warrior Rock' album - recorded at Hammersmith Odeon, London - is the latest work from her catalogue to be reissued.

Featuring 15 songs centred around material from the band's UK Top 10 albums, 'Anthem' (1981) and 'The Changeling' (1982), hit singles *It's A Mystery*, *I Want To Be Free* and *Thunder In The Mountains* all feature alongside fan favourites *Ieya*, *Danced* and *War Boys*.

Presented across three discs, the new edition boasts 21 remastered tracks from master tapes/archive sources, including a massive 26 previously-unreleased bonus tracks, with a total of 19 different songs feature from 11 different gigs.

For the first time ever, the four sides of the original live double album are included on CD, with a wealth of bonus tracks that provide both a glimpse at concert preparations and document the tour's journey across the UK.



Another great release from Cherry Red's ongoing Toyah series.

RICKY MARTIN
★★☆☆☆
RELEASED: **May 17 *Sony***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl**

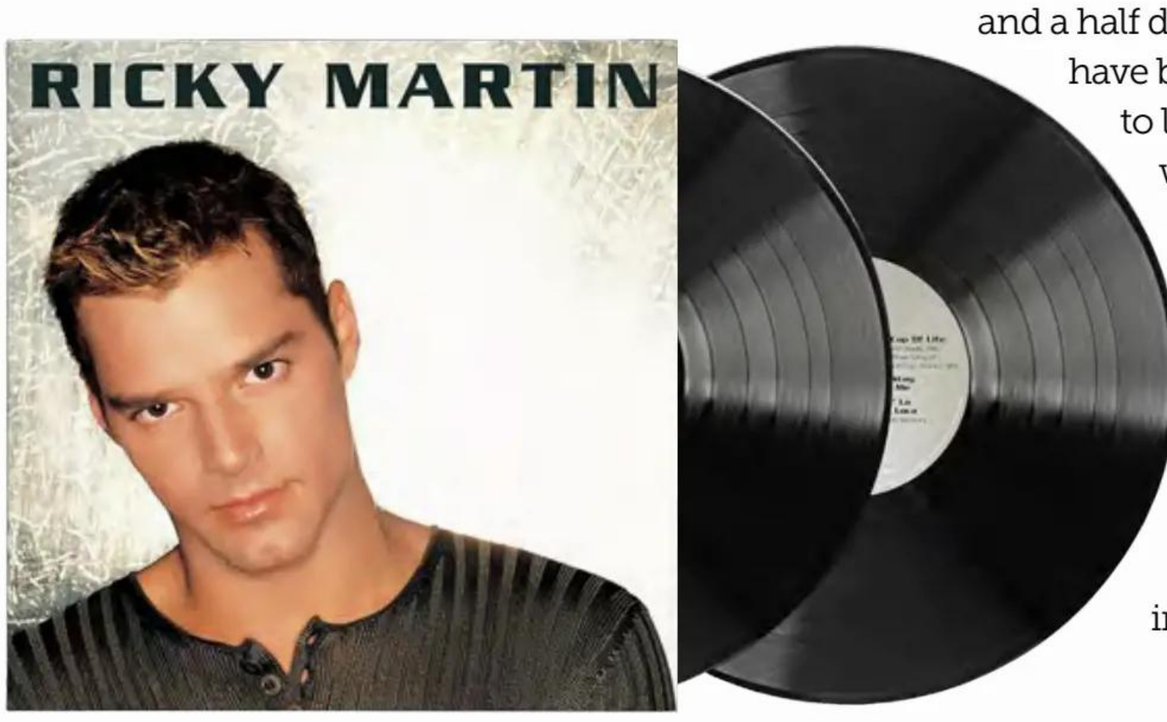
Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the chart-topping debut English-language album from Ricky Martin arrives on vinyl with a double-disc pressing.

Featuring the global No. 1 hit, *Livin' La Vida Loca*, the 1999 classic also includes follow-ups *She's All I Ever Had*, *Shake Your Bon-Bon* and *Private Emotion* and took the Puerto Rican star to a global stage and began the "Latin explosion" of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

For the reissue, the long-player gets a 2LP black vinyl pressing, featuring the original UK and US tracklist, without any additional content.

Considering the magnitude of the album upon its initial release, it's unfortunate that this anniversary celebration doesn't come with any bonus content - not even the hidden Spanish bonus track.

As a vinyl release, it's a nice package overall that remains faithful to the original record, but marking two and a half decades it would have been more fitting to lean into the wealth of remixes that were commissioned at the time and really fete the project with an expanded exploration of the hugely-influential era.



QUEEN
QUEEN ROCK MONTREAL
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **May 10 *Virgin***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2Blu-Ray, 2Ultra HD 4K Blu-Ray, 3LP**
Black Vinyl

'Queen Rock Montreal' captures the iconic rock band at the very peak of their live powers.

Recorded in 1981, the footage was recently released as a record-breaking digitally restored IMAX concert film, which is now being released globally as both double Blu-Ray and double 4K Ultra High Definition packages, plus 2CD and 3LP packages.

Clocking in at 28 tracks, the concert, which was one of the final stops on 'The Game Tour', offers a storming set from Roger Taylor, Freddie Mercury, Brian May and John Deacon, as they deliver a non-stop run of classic hit records.

Visual formats feature strikingly crisp footage which, considering the time of recording, is remarkable to witness, and offers an unrivalled connection with the group - particularly Mercury - in action.

While audio versions have previously been available, with Queen's ever-growing popularity among the younger crowd it's hardly a surprise to see CD and vinyl reissues too - both of which, again, are a treat to behold.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

DAVID BOWIE
DIAMOND DOGS
50TH ANNIVERSARY
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **May 24 *Parlophone***
FORMATS: **1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc**

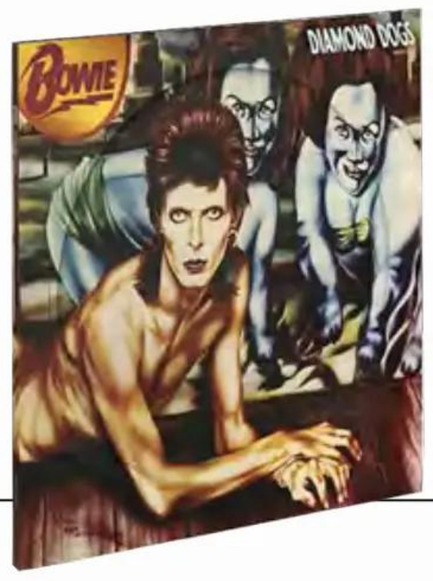
'Diamond Dogs', the seminal album from David Bowie, is revisited for its 50th anniversary with a half-speed master and picture disc vinyl release.

Delivering singles including the title song, *Rebel Rebel* and *1984* - named after George Orwell's dystopian novel - the record uses those themes as a conceptual blueprint.

Perhaps not as slick a piece as Bowie's earlier 'Ziggy Stardust' works, it packs enough gems to stand out as a classic from his repertoire and the breadth of influences serves as yet another reminder of his brilliance.

The new remaster of the set brings out a clarity in the recordings on the black vinyl release, while the picture disc edition showcases the iconic artwork, which depicts Bowie as a striking half-man, half-dog, sporting his Ziggy Stardust haircut as two "freak-show" dogs surround him, against a backdrop of New York City.

No bonus content, but the remaster alone is worth the punt - and the picture disc's a beauty too!



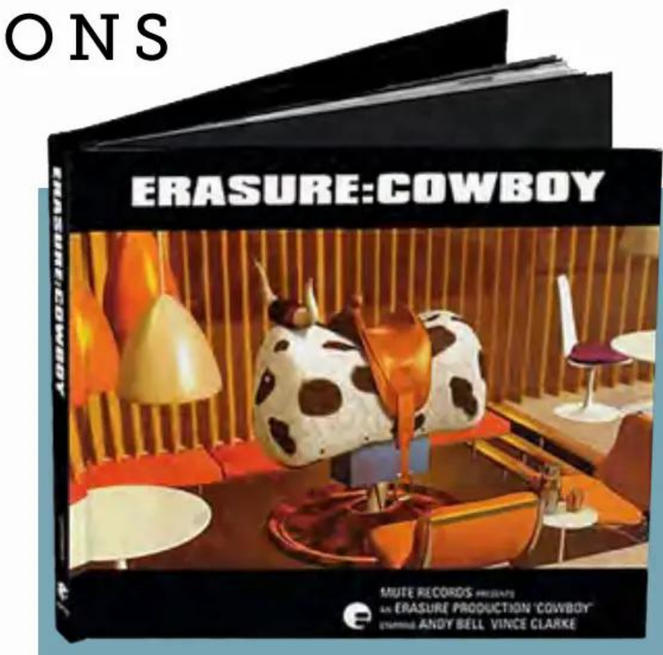
CHINA CRISIS
CHINA GREATNESS
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **May 31 *Last Night From Glasgow***
FORMATS: **2CD, 1LP Red Vinyl, 1LP Yellow Vinyl, 2LP Red Vinyl, 2LP Yellow Vinyl**

Packed with classic hits and fan favourites, China Crisis' latest compilation documents the group's history.

With tracks arranged by Jack Hymers and recorded and mixed by Mark Phythian, the double-disc set includes *Wishful Thinking*, *Arizona Sky*, *Christian*, *King In A Catholic Style*, *Black Man Ray*, *It's Never Too Late* and more.

Arriving across formats, it serves as a reintroduction to the group, who released their last album almost a decade ago and have joined forces with the Scottish label on a series of catalogue reissues that spotlight their work from the 1980s until now.

The longing for a body of new material aside, these revisited recordings offer a fresh perspective and highlight the enduring appeal of the new wave and synth-pop outfit's work, with a quality that justifies its place in any fan's collection.



ERASURE
COWBOY
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **May 31 *Mute***
FORMATS: **2CD**

Originally released in 1997, Erasure's eighth album is their latest to be expanded and reissued as a double-disc set.

Featuring a trio of hit singles - *In My Arms*, *Don't Say Your Love Is Killing Me* and *Rain* - the record gave the duo another UK Top 10 placement and proved a hit on the continent, with the bumper release containing previously-unreleased material, new remixes, alternative and extended editions, along with live material from 'The Tiny Tour'.

Additionally, remixes by TELEX, Blancmange and Stealing Sheep revisit the three singles through the lens of today, with the set accompanied by a 28-page booklet with extensive sleeve notes on the record, which was released by Madonna's label Maverick Records in the US.

A period that delivered a wealth of remixes, the set is notably abridged - in fact, a singles box would be more apt for the volume of material that was issued - but as a precis of the era it's nonetheless a neat introduction.

GINA G
FRESH!
★★★★★
RELEASED: **May 31 *90/9***
FORMATS: **2CD+DVD, 1LP Purple Vinyl**

Chart-topper and Eurovision legend Gina G's debut album, 'Fresh!', is revisited for a joyous expanded reissue this month.

Packed with pop classics, including the iconic *Ooh Aah... Just A Little Bit*, along with the Top 20 smashes *I Belong To You*, *Fresh!* and *Ti Amo*, the album receives its first-ever vinyl release, along with a triple-disc 2CD+DVD set that includes the original tracklist, plus the previously-unreleased song, *Waiting On Your Love*.

The first major project for the Metro songwriting and production team, with contributions from Motiv8, Cutfather and Joe, and former PWL mainstays Phil Harding and Ian Curnow, the set includes 12" mixes for the singles along with an extended run of reworks from such luminaries as Hysteric Ego, DJ Tonka and Todd Terry, many of which were previously promo-only, vinyl-only or unreleased.

All six promo videos are released together for the first time on DVD, together with Gina's 1996 Eurovision performance, with each disc housed in an individual card sleeve showcasing David LaChapelle's iconic original photoshoot.

Packaged with a 24-page booklet including additional photos, new sleeve notes, full lyrics and an illustrated discography, it makes for a fantastic release celebrating one of the finest pop debuts of all time.

KEANE
HOPES AND FEARS (20TH ANNIVERSARY)
★★★★★
RELEASED: **May 10 *UMC***
FORMATS: **3CD, 2LP Live Edition, 1LP Galaxy Vinyl, 2LP Coloured Vinyl, Box Set (3CD + 7" Single)**

'Hopes And Fears' - Keane's debut album and one of the best-selling records of the 2000s - celebrates is 20th anniversary with a new expanded edition.

Featuring classics such as *Everybody's Changing* and *Somewhere Only We Know*, the LP showcases the band's trademark sound, with frontman Tom Chaplin's distinctive vocals carrying the set.

Now a triple-disc collection, the original album comes remastered along with an extended run of bonus content, including unreleased demos, B-sides and rarities from the original sessions. A set of 5.1 Dolby Atmos mixes comes from David Kosten.

Included is the title song from the 'Love Actually' soundtrack, which failed to make the original cut, along with an extended package of early 2002/2003 demos that showcase the development of the record.

Packaged with new sleeve notes from the band and original team, and available across formats, it makes for a fitting celebration of one of British pop's standout albums of the 21st Century.

DEAD OR ALIVE
RUNNING WILD: THE INEVITABLE YEARS
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **May 31 *Cherry***
FORMATS: **1LP Berry Red Vinyl**

Travelling back to Dead Or Alive's earliest era, 'Running Wild: The Inevitable Years' showcases Pete Burns as one of the earliest explorers of the post-punk Goth scene.

Featuring two classic 7" singles - *I'm Falling* and *Number Eleven* - along with related recordings for John Peel's seminal BBC Radio One programme, the set serves as a companion to last year's 'Let Them Drag My Soul Away'.

Clocking nine tracks, it marks the first time the Peel Session tracks have been issued on vinyl and is a curious documentation of the group's formative years, with seven individual tracks included.

Housed in a cover photograph shot by Dead Or Alive's then-manager, Francesco Mellina, it's a body of work set to appease diehard fans of the group and sets itself aside from the hi-NRG sounds of their Stock Aitken Waterman years and beyond.

Still, it's an integral part of their history that's more than deserving of a full release, 40+ years later.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | **COMPILATIONS**

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL ROCK ANTHEMS

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 31 *Sony***
FORMATS: **4CD, 3LP Purple Vinyl**

Rock and power ballads from across the decades are celebrated on NOW's new 'Rock Anthems' compilation, collating 79 epic hits.

Launching with Queen's iconic *Don't Stop Me Now*, legendary hits from Meat Loaf (*Bat Out Of Hell*), Survivor (*Eye Of The Tiger*) and Europe (*The Final Countdown*) lead into a run from '80s icons including Cher, Pat Benatar and Pretenders.

The Boss Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney and Elton John are among the music legends who feature in a run of '70s rock anthems, alongside new wave/rock fusions from Blondie (*One Way Or Another*) and R.E.M. (*The One I Love*) and '80s hits from Belinda Carlisle (*Leave A Light On*) and Kim Carnes (*Bette Davis Eyes*).

Meanwhile, a run of '90s classics including Lenny Kravitz's *Are You Gonna Go My Way* and 4 Non Blondes' *What's Up?* lead into Coldplay's *Fix You* - one of the most recent releases to make the set.

A lack of contemporary cuts is notable, but that doesn't detract from the material on offer, which collectively showcases the very best of the genre.

NOW YEARBOOK 1974

★★★★☆

RELEASED: MAY 3 ***Sony***
FORMATS: **4CD, 4CD Special Edition, 3LP Green Vinyl**

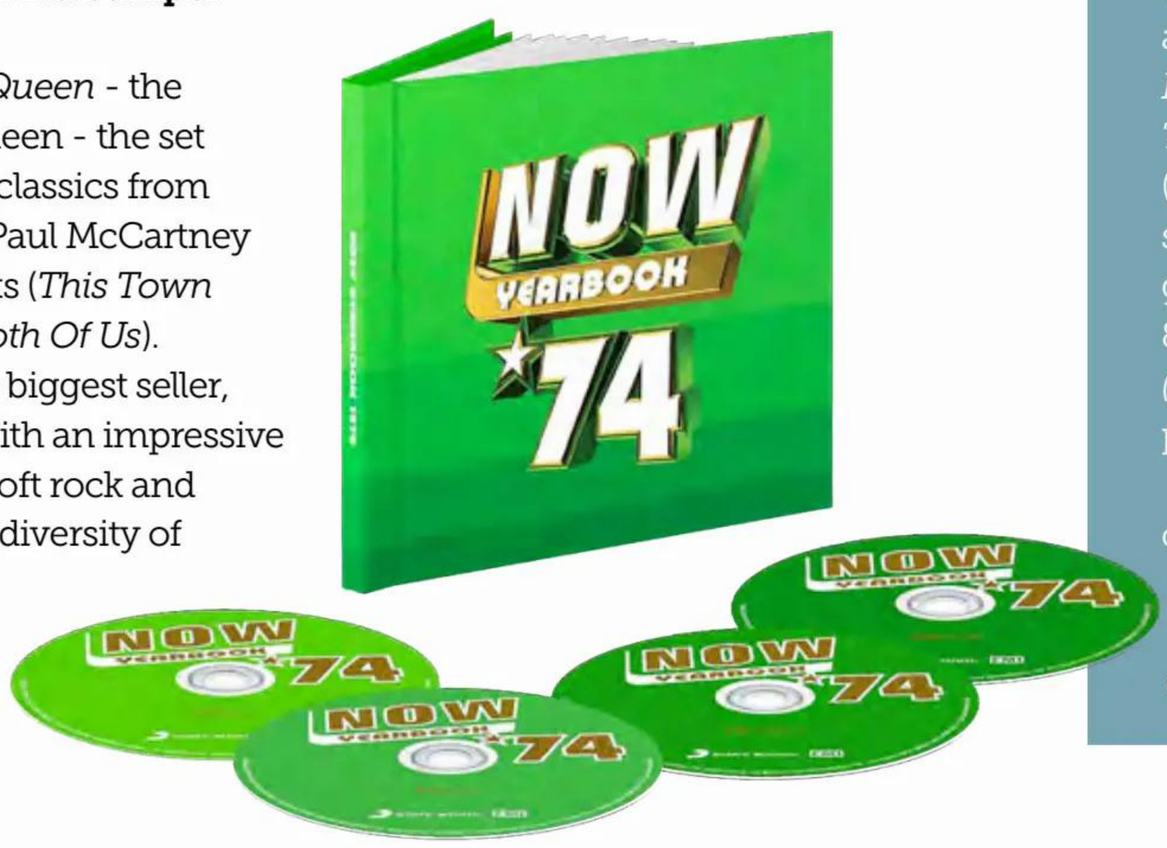
The latest instalment of NOW's 'Yearbook' series takes a trip back 50 years in pop history with a bumper 82 tracks from 1984.

Opening with *Killer Queen* - the first Top 5 single for Queen - the set launches with a run of classics from enduring acts such as Paul McCartney & Wings (*Jet*) and Sparks (*This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us*).

Included is the year's biggest seller, *Tiger Feet* from Mud, with an impressive selection of pop, soul, soft rock and more, highlighting the diversity of the charts.

Lulu and David Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World* features alongside timeless anthems including *Candle In The Wind* from Elton John and *I Honestly Love You* by Olivia Newton-John, once again spotlighting the defining tracks of the year.

Closing with the year's Christmas No. 1, Mud's *Lonely This Christmas*, it's another strong celebration of 12 months in pop history, half a century ago.



NOW 80S DANCEFLOOR: R&B & FUNK

★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 17 *Sony***
FORMATS: **2LP Red & White Vinyl**

The latest 'Dancefloor' compilation from NOW casts a light on R&B and funk with 30 classics across 2LPs that celebrate the best of the decade.

Opening with the era-defining *Word Up!* from Cameo, the set leads into classics such as Barry White's *Sho' You Right* and James Brown's *Living In America* from the 'Rocky IV' soundtrack.

Although originally released in the '70s, Maceo And The Macks' *Cross The Tracks* and the Jackson Sisters' *I Believe In Miracles* both became rare-groove classics of the era, while Aretha Franklin's *Freeway Of Love* proves the Queen of Soul's continued influence.

Building on a foundation of funky R&B with electronic beats and hooks, the Dazz Band (*Let It All Blow*), Sly Fox (*Let's Go All The Way*) and Michael Jackson (*Somebody's Watching Me*) showcase the progression of the genre through the '80s, while Sly & Robbie & Shinehead's (*Boops (Here To Go)*) sees the funk pioneers score their biggest hit.

Again, a superb set that celebrates the iconic sounds of the '80s that have kept dance floors moving for decades to come.

CAUGHT live

BANANARAMA
GLORIOUS – THE ULTIMATE PARTY
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2024
THE PALLADIUM, LONDON
★★★★★

Packing four decades of hits into one 90 minute show was never going to be easy, but taking to the stage for the first of three sold-out nights at The London Palladium, Bananarama were firing on all cylinders with a non-stop run of classics from the group's storied history.

Emerging to the iconic Stock Aitken Waterman sound of *I Heard A Rumour*, Sara Dallin and Keren Woodward appeared resplendent in glittering black and gold jumpsuits that sparkled as they delivered armography in abundance.

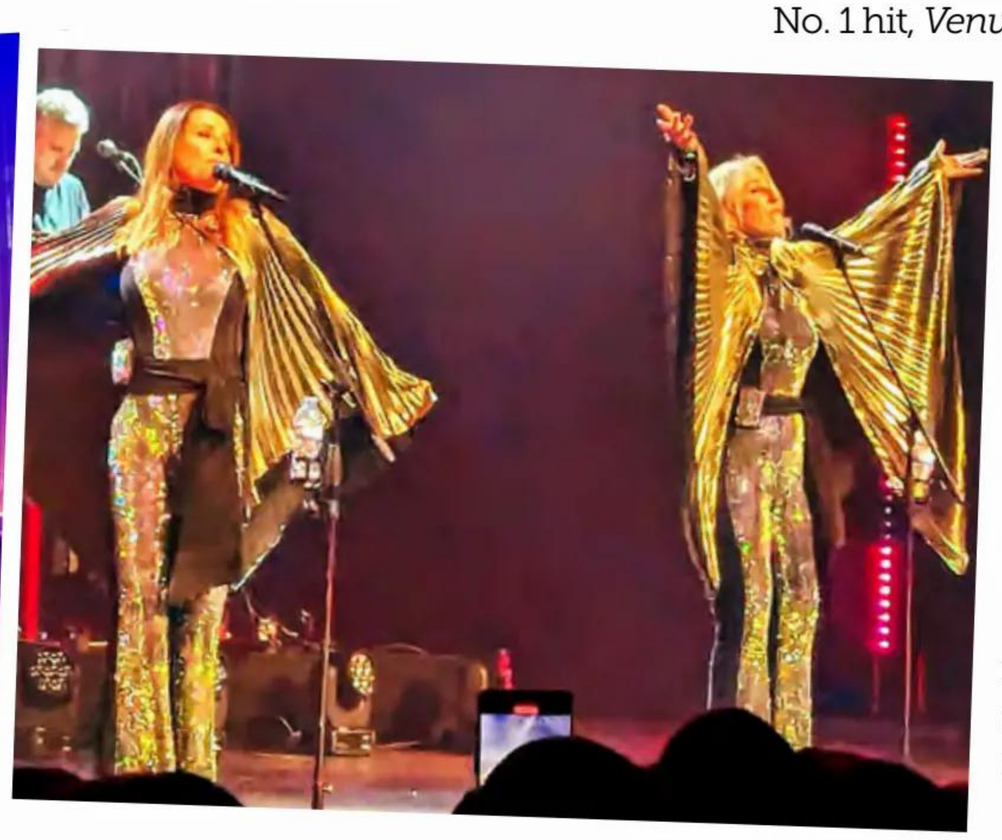
Classics from the pair's 1993 duo debut 'Please Yourself' - *Last Thing On My Mind* and *Movin' On* - both of which later became party staples for pop outfit Steps, continued a set comprised of classic hits such as *Cruel Summer*, *Robert De Niro's Waiting*, *Really Saying Something* and *Love In The First Degree*, and lesser-performed numbers from their 12 studio albums.

A Trick Of The Night was the first of several surprises in the 27-song set, which touched upon Bananarama's original '80s years with Siobhan Fahey, along with their late-'80s/early-'90s run with Jacquie O'Sullivan, with the rarely-performed *Love Truth and Honesty*, *Preacher Man* and "by popular demand" *Only Your Love* all making appearances.

As did various numbers from their more recent albums; Top 30 smashes *Move In My Direction* and the Angel City mix of *Look On The Floor* from 2005's 'Drama' proved real crowd-pleasers, along with the gothic disco title song from 2022's 'Masquerade' and Blondie-esque *Looking For Someone* from 'In Stereo' (2019).

It wasn't the only reference to Debbie Harry and co., with a cover of the classic *Atomic* segueing into the live debut of Bananarama's latest single *Supernova*. *Stuff Like That* was also refreshed with a mash-up of Sister Sledge's *Lost In Music*.

Joining the duo on stage for *Favourite* was Sara's daughter Alice - who co-wrote the song - which led into a run of huge anthems, including 2009's epic *Love Don't Live Here* and the 'Glorious' single *Feel The Love*, before the pair exited the stage and returned sporting pleated gold capes for a roof-raising finale of Dead Or Alive's *You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)* and their 1986 US No. 1 hit, *Venus*.



Armed with a faultless arsenal of classic songs, not only did Bananarama deliver a standout show that ranks among the best of their career, but in sequencing their biggest hits alongside hidden gems they proved once more to be one of British pop's most consistent acts of the past four decades, more than deserving of The Ultimate Girl Group title.

PHOTOS INSTAGRAM @BANANARAMA_OFFICIAL, RETROPOP

CAUGHT *live*

MADISON BEER *SPINNIN TOUR* MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024 EVENTIM APOLLO, LONDON ★★★★☆

Following the release of her sophomore album 'Silence Between Songs', American singer Madison Beer is currently embarking on the European leg of her 'Spinnin Tour'.

For the London stop, the 25-year-old performed her biggest UK show at Hammersmith's iconic Eventim Apollo, accompanied by a live band, a big screen and a roaring crowd.

Opening a set filled with all the emotions was the psychedelic pop banger *Home To Another* One and the ethereal number was met with such passion that fans were screaming the lyrics louder than she was singing them.

With a clear admiration for her back catalogue, the audience carried on belting out every word as Beer continued with more favourites – *Good In Goodbye*, *Sweet Relief* and *Showed Me (How I Fell In Love With You)*.

As the show proceeded with futuristic visuals and occasionally some throwback clips, Beer slowed down the pace with several ballads. A standout moment was the heartfelt *Selfish*; a signature hit from her discography that effortlessly shows off her elegant vocals.

The ultimate highlight of the night, however, was when she performed her latest single *Make You Mine*. Turning the venue into a nightclub, the sexy yet euphoric anthem almost blew the roof off with 5,300 fans jumping up and down as if their life depended on it.

Maintaining that energy, Beer went straight into *BOYSHIT* and turned up the sass levels even further.

Having already sung over 20 songs, she completed her beastly set on a high with the Queen-inspired *King Of Everything*.

Having attended many shows from Beer over the years, it's clear that the stage is where she shines most. And while her career continues to see her booked on bigger stages each time she hits the road, it's time she got what she deserves, which is a national arena tour.

WORDS FABIO MAGNOCAVALLO **PHOTO** COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

CAUGHT live

MJ THE MUSICAL
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024
PRINCE EDWARD THEATRE, LONDON
★★★☆☆

Capturing a character as multifaceted as Michael Jackson in a two-hour jukebox musical was never going to be easy - no matter how talented a leading man you cast.

For 'MJ The Musical's West End debut, it's original Broadway star Myles Frost who takes on the role and offers up an electrifying, show-stopping performance, proving himself to be the ultimate triple-threat.

Can he act 'Dangerous' era Michael to a tee? Yes. Can he moonwalk the length and breadth of the Prince Edward Theatre stage and pull off almost every other iconic move from the King of Pop's arsenal? Absolutely. Can he vocally deliver one of the most impressive repertoires in pop history? For sure.

But it's the plot of the estate-approved musical that proves a stumbling block. 'MJ The Musical' has already been a massive hit on Broadway and has a book by great American playwright, Lynn Nottage, which addresses various aspects of Jackson's life, from Bubbles the chimp to his changing skin colour.

Set in 1992 during rehearsals for the 'Dangerous' world tour, its backdrop is less than a year before child sex abuse allegations were first levelled against the star. But it's not a completely varnished view of the hitmaker, documenting his pride and perfectionism in his work, and his butting heads with director Rob (Ashley Zhangazha) and finance man Dave (Jon Tsouras).

It also traces much of his behaviour back to Joseph, his pushy father - also played by Zhangazha - whose influence on his son is a key motif throughout the production.

Jackson's painkiller habit comes into play, being traced back to the making of a 1984 Pepsi commercial (with Mitchell Zhangazha playing a young Jackson) and later used as a coping mechanism during the final Jacksons tour, but all of 'grit' seems dubious when his later years are taken into account.

Other plot elements fall short too; notably, the basis of the production being an MTV crew visiting rehearsals to snatch a rare interview with the star adds little to the narrative, much of which unfolds outside of their involvement. It brings us closer to the complicated man behind the music, even if there seems to be boundaries in place.

The narrative may be limited, but fortunately it all comes back to the songs and the real merit of 'MJ The Musical' is its stellar cast, which performs to perfection classics from across the decades, showcasing Jackson's impressive versatility and the timelessness of the material that propelled him to become one of the biggest stars the world has ever seen.

PHOTOS JOHAN PERSSON

RELEASE RADAR *Coming soon...*

NEW MUSIC

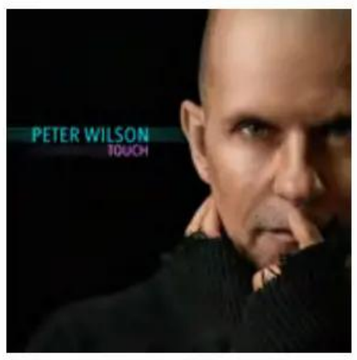
BON JOVI
FOREVER
RELEASED:
June 7 *EMI*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Black & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Candy Apple & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Cobalt Blue & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Ocean Waves Vinyl

The rockers return with their 40th anniversary album featuring the epic new single Legendary.

MADNESS
THEATRE OF THE ABSURD PRESENTS C'EST LA VIE (ENHANCED EDITION)
RELEASED: **June 7 *BMG***
FORMATS: **2CD, Limited Edition Vinyl Bookpack (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Having scored the group their first UK No. 1 album, Madness' latest record is expanded with new material for a deluxe re-release.

PETER WILSON
TOUCH
RELEASED:
June 7 *Energise*
FORMATS:
2CD, 2LP Coloured Vinyl



Celebrating 30 years in music, Peter's 11th album includes the singles *Imagine That* and *Heard It In A Heartbeat*.

MEGHAN TRAINOR
TIMELESS
RELEASED:
June 14 *Sony*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl

Supported by the lead single *Been Like This*, a collaboration with T-Pain, the LP precedes Meghan's return to touring after seven years!

FLORRIE
THE LOST ONES
RELEASED:
June 14 *BMG*
FORMATS: **1LP Tangerine Vinyl**

The long-awaited debut album from the singer-songwriter, released in collaboration with Xenomania.

JOHN GRANT
THE ART OF THE LIE
RELEASED:
June 14 *PIAS*
FORMATS:
CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Pink Vinyl, Assorted Coloured Cassettes

A project over a year in the making, the record is billed as Grant's "most opulent, cinematic, luxurious album yet".

ANASTACIA
OUR SONGS (GOLD DELUXE EDITION)
RELEASED:
June 21 *Edel*
FORMATS:
TBA

An expanded edition of the US superstar's latest album features a handful of bonus tracks, sticking with the theme of reworked German originals.

KATE NASH
9 SAD SYMPHONIES
RELEASED:
June 21
Kill Rock Stars
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Translucent Baby Blue Vinyl, 1LP Olive Green & Cornetto Vinyl, 1LP Pink Vinyl

The singer-songwriter's first LP signed to the legendary Kill Rock Stars label, produced and mixed by Grammy-winner Frederik Thaae.

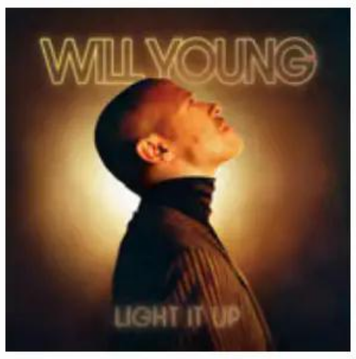
KASABIAN
HAPPENINGS
RELEASED:
July 5 *Columbia*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl, 1LP Red Vinyl

The eighth album from the lad rockers and their first since 2022's 'The Alchemist's Euphoria'

MARC ALMOND
I'M NOT ANYONE
RELEASED:
July 12 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl

An 11-song covers collection of gems from the likes of Don McLean, King Crimson, Paul Anka, Colin Blunstone and Mahalia Jackson.

WILL YOUNG
LIGHT IT UP
RELEASED:
August 9 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Transparent Orange Vinyl



A 10-track return to "joyous pop", the latest album from the singer-songwriter sees him reconnect with a host of familiar faces while inviting in new collaborators too.

NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS
WILD GOD
RELEASED:
August 30 *PIAS*
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Clear Vinyl, 1LP Grey Vinyl**

The 18th studio album by the Australian rock band and their first in five years.

LOOKING BACK

DAVID BOWIE
ROCK N ROLL STAR!

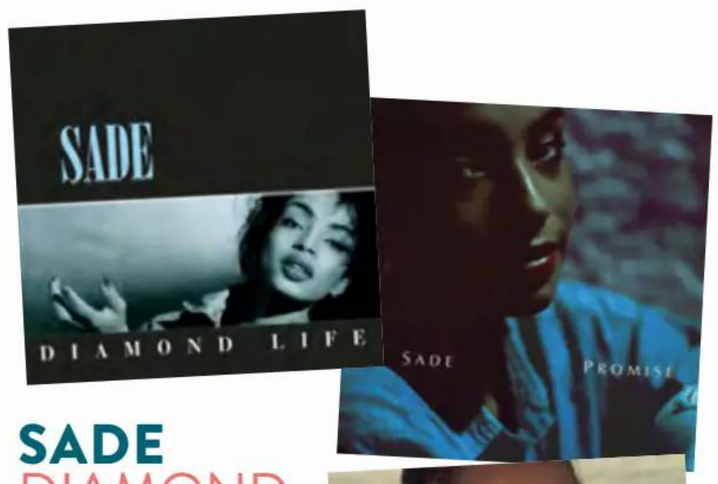
RELEASED:
June 14 *Parlophone*
FORMATS:
5CD + Blu-Ray, 1LP Black Vinyl

Charting Bowie's journey to Ziggy Stardust with early home demos, radio sessions and live performances, along with outtakes and alternate versions from 'The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust'.

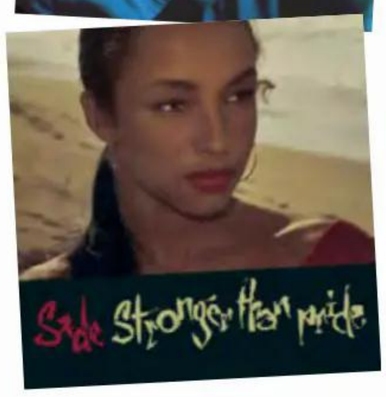
SEAL
SEAL II

RELEASED:
June 14 *Rhino*
FORMATS:
2CD + DVD, 1LP Black Vinyl

Celebrating its 30th anniversary with the original remastered album, plus alternate versions, previously-unreleased music and select covers.



SADE
DIAMOND LIFE; PROMISE; LOVE IS STRONGER THAN PRIDE



RELEASED:
June 21 *Epic*
FORMATS: **1LP Black Vinyl**

The first three albums from the group are available individually on vinyl as part of a complete catalogue reissue series.

CLAIRE RICHARDS
MY WILDEST DREAMS

RELEASED:
June 28 *Demon*
FORMATS:
1LP Pink Vinyl

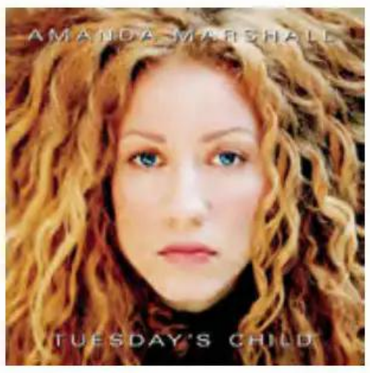
The debut album from the Steps powerhouse arrives on vinyl for the first time in line with its 5th anniversary.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
RUSTY EGAN PRESENTS BLITZED!

RELEASED:
June 28 *Demon*
FORMATS: **4CD, 4LP Black Vinyl**

Bringing together the sounds of a night at the club circa 1980, this epic compilation celebrates the dawning of the New Romantic era.

AMANDA MARSHALL
TUESDAY'S CHILD



RELEASED:
Late June *Sony Music Canada*
FORMATS: **2LP Translucent Blue Vinyl**

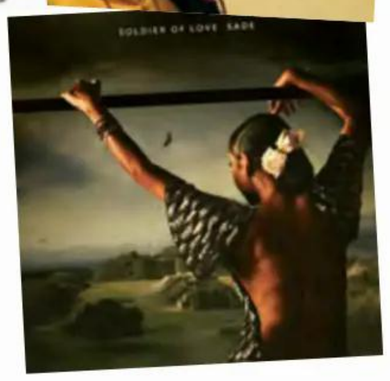
First ever vinyl release of the classic album featuring the original tracklist plus the Japanese bonus track *Just Love Me*, co-written with Carole King.

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD
UNWRITTEN

RELEASED:
September 6 *Xxx*
FORMATS:
1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Peach Dream Vinyl

After its title song experienced a second round of success 20 years later, the debut album from Natasha Bedingfield gets its first vinyl release.

SADE
LOVE DELUXE, LOVERS ROCK AND SOLDIER OF LOVE



RELEASED: **September 20 *Epic***
FORMATS: **1LP Black Vinyl**

Completing the latest run of releases from the hugely-influential group arrive on vinyl, showcasing their most recent work.

LIGHTNING SEEDS
TOMORROW'S HERE TODAY: 35 YEARS OF LIGHTNING SEEDS

RELEASED:
October 4 *Sony*
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP White Vinyl**

The ultimate celebration of three-and-a-half decades of hits including Pure, Lucky You, 3 Lions and more!

For all the latest RETROPOP releases visit
RETROPOPMAGAZINE.COM

ON THE ROAD... AGAIN

As **Bryan Adams** returns to London's Royal Albert Hall for a three-night residency - amid the current leg of his world tour - get clued up on the Canadian icon!

1 What was Bryan's first album to achieve international success?

2 Before going solo, he replaced Nick Gilder as frontman of which glam rock band?

3 In the summer of 1986, Bryan performed on the Amnesty International 'A Conspiracy of Hope' tour alongside which three artists?

4 Which song spent 16 consecutive weeks at No. 1 on the UK Singles Chart?

5 Bryan and Tina Turner scored a hit with which duet?

6 A cover of which song became a chart-topping dance hit for DJ Sammy and Yanou in 2002?

7 *Run To You* and *Summer Of '69* were singles from which 1984 album?

8 Name Bryan's duet with Melanie C.

9 Released in 1991, what's the title of his most successful studio album?

10 In 2006, Bryan was inducted into which Hall of Fame?

11 Which song was featured in the soundtrack for the film 'Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron'?

12 Name the song Bryan performed at the closing ceremony of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

13 He won his first Grammy Award in which category?

14 Bryan collaborated with Rod Stewart and which other artist on the song *All For Love*?

15 Which song was used as the theme for the 1996 film 'The Mirror Has Two Faces'?

16 How many Juno Awards has Bryan won to date?

17 Along with Jim Vallance, he wrote music and lyrics to which musical, based on a 1990 movie?

18 An accomplished photographer, for what did Bryan shoot Cher and Iggy Pop, among others, in the summer of 2021?

19 What's the name of his 15th and most recent studio album?

20 Bryan credited which artist for inspiring his 'Classic' series of re-recorded hits?

ANSWERS: 1 'Cuts Like A Knife' (1983); **2** Sweeney Todd; **3** Sting, U2 and Peter Gabriel; **4** *(Everything I Do) I Do It for You*; **5** *It's Only Love*; **6** *Heaven*; **7** 'Reckless'; **8** *When You're Gone*; **9** 'Waking Up The Neighbours';**10** Canadian Music Hall of Fame; **11** *Here I Am*; **12** *Bang The Drum (with Nelly Furtado)*; **13** Best Song Written Specifically for a Motion Picture or for Television (for *(Everything I Do) I Do It for You* from the movie 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves'),. **14** Sting; **15** *I Finally Found Someone (with Barbra Streisand)*; **16** 20; **17** 'Pretty Woman'; **18** The 48th Pirelli Calendar; **19** 'So Happy It Hurts' (2022); **20** Taylor Swift

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

LOREEN

FEB // MAR
2025 TOUR

SAT 15 FEB
NL, UTRECHT TIVOLIVREDENBURG
SUN 16 FEB
DEU, OBERHAUSEN TURBINENHALLE
WED 19 FEB
NOR, OSLO SENTRUM SCENE
THU 20 FEB
SE, STOCKHOLM ANNEXET
SAT 22 FEB
LITH, VILNIUS TWINSBET ARENA
SUN 23 FEB
POL, WARSAW STODOLA
MON 24 FEB
POL, KRAKOW STUDIO
TUE 25 FEB
DEU, BERLIN HUXLEY'S
THU 27 FEB
CZEC, PRAGUE ROXY

FRI 28 FEB
AUS, VIENNA GASOMETER
SUN 02 MARCH
HU, BUDAPEST AKVARIUM KLUB
TUE 04 MARCH
DEU, MUNICH MUFFATHALLE
WED 05 MARCH
BE, BRUSSELS ANCIENNE BELGIQUE
THU 06 MARCH
FR, PARIS OLYMPIA
SAT 08 MARCH
ESP, BARCELONA PARAL-LEL 62
SUN 09 MARCH
ESP, MADRID LA RIVIERA
TUE 11 MARCH
CH, ZURICH X-TRA
WED 12
IT, MILAN FABRIQUE

FRI 14 MARCH
FR, LYON LE TRANSBORDEUR
SAT 15 MARCH
LXM, LUXEMBOURG DEN ATELIER
MON 17 MARCH
UK, BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
WED 19 MARCH
UK, LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
FRI 21 MARCH
UK, LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY
SAT 22 MARCH
UK, MANCHESTER ACADEMY
SUN 23 MARCH
UK, BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
TUE 25 MARCH
UK, GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
THU 27 MARCH
IR, DUBLIN 3OLYMPIA

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NOW
THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC!
NOAH KAHAN • TEDDY SWIMS • ARIANA GRANDE • BENSON BOONE • DUA LIPA • TATE McRAE • JACK HARLOW • THE LAST DINNER PARTY
RAYE • LANA DEL REY • PAUL RUSSELL • MILEY CYRUS • LEWIS CAPALDI • TYLA • ELLA HENDERSON FEAT. RUDIMENTAL • P!NK
KYLIE MINOGUE • PET SHOP BOYS • OLLY ALEXANDER (YEARS & YEARS) • TROYE SIVAN • NATHAN DAWE • NICKI MINAJ
PINKPANTHERESS FEAT. CENTRAL CEE • BECKY HILL & SONNY FODERA • ZARA LARSSON & DAVID GUETTA
05.04.24